THE ART OF VAMPIRELLA® THE WARREN YEARS

DYNAMITE

Written by
DAVID ROACH

Book design by
RODOLFO MURAGUCHI LUZ

Digital re-mastering by Mike Kelleher, Josh Johnson, Chris Caniano, and Katie Hidalgo

Copy editing by by Molly Mahan, Sarah Lit, and Hannah Gorfinkle

Special thanks to:
Manuel Andes, Ruben Azcona (www.PaperbackArt.com) Chris Caniano, Brom, Piers Casimir, Alex Chun , Jon B Cooke, Jon Copperweld, Robert Dennis, Manel Dominguez, Enric Torres Prat, Jay Erish, Juana De Haro, Arnie Fenner, Tom Fleming, Eric Fowler at the Society of Illustrators, Michael Friedlander, Michael Gidwitz, James Halperin, Katie Hidalgo, David Horne, Rian Hughes, Luis Garcia Mozos, Paolo Giovenale, Mario Girard, Emilio Gonzalo, Hannah Gorfinkel, Paul Gulacy, Josh Johnson, George Khoury, Carsten laqua (at Gallery laqua Berlin www.originalcomicart.com), Sarah Litt, Molly Mahan, Don Mangus (at Heritage auctions ha.com), Ken Meyer Jnr., Raimundo Molina Martinez, Marcel Miralles, Steven Morger, Antonio Munoz, Doug Murray, Pam Murray, Ingrid Neilson, Marc Pecorella, Gabriel Picart, Enrique Alonso Saiz, Sanjulian, Larry Shell, Jeff Singh, Jose Villarrubia

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ISBN-10: 1-60690-420-5
ISBN-13: 978-1-60690-420-6
First Printing

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

THE ART OF VAMPIRELLA®: THE WARREN YEARS. Contains materials originally published in Vampirella Magazine #1-112, Vampirella Magazine 1972 Annual, and Warren Presents #8 Pantha. Published by Dynamite Entertainment. 113 Gaither Dr., STE. 205, Mt. Laurel, NJ. 08054. Vampirella ® and © 2013 Dynamite. All rights reserved. DYNAMITE, DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT and its logo are ® 2013 Dynamite. All names, characters, events, and locales in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events or places, without satiric intent, is coincidental. No portion of this book may be reproduced by any means (digital or print) without the written permission of Dynamite Entertainment except for review purposes. The scanning, uploading and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Printed in China

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THE ART OF VAMPIRELLA®
THE WARREN YEARS

VAMPIRELLA

FOREWORD

BY ENRICH

"Enric, I have got two pieces of news for you, a good one and a bad one." This was the way Josep Toutain, CEO of the international agency S.I., began the short telephone conversation during which he told me that my work had been approved by Jim Warren. The bad news was that Warren had come to Barcelona and met with almost all the illustrators working at that time for S.I. I say "almost" because nobody invited me to the meeting; those responsible for the agency forgot to invite me. The good news, however, was that Jim Warren had been very pleased with my work. He approved my sketches and accepted an illustration that I had completed as a sample for him. There was still one more bit of news. The editor had proposed that I create a monthly cover for his magazines *Creepy* and *Eerie* and somewhat later also *Vampirella*. I remember with nostalgia my passion for working, and working very hard, in those wonderful years. I cannot remember whether my first commission for the US market was for Warren Publishing or covers for Pocket, Dell, or Ace books, because all of these jobs were painted almost simultaneously. Every cover, every job, was a true adventure. I used to take pictures of myself in various disguises trying to interpret the different roles. In those days there were not many modeling agencies in Barcelona, and their rates were often out of reach for a modest illustrator.

About the iconic Vampirella poster: José (Pepe) González did the drawing and I painted it. I must state that I have never had any intention of talking about it, but now I think the time is right to do so. There are many crazy versions on this subject and I want to take this opportunity to shine some light on it. The idea came up because Jim Warren wanted to promote Pepe as the illustrator of the Vampirella stories, and the best idea that he had was requesting Toutain to ask Pepe to create a color poster of the famous character. The problem was that Pepe had not mastered the art of painting. He almost exclusively used colored pencils and watercolors, but this work had to be done using oil paints, and therefore, he simply could not do it. It was Toutain, knowing that Pepe and I had collaborated on some pictures together in the past, who proposed to Warren that Pepe would do the drawing and I would do the color. Warren liked the idea and soon we got down to work. The only condition was that the artwork had to be signed by Pepe, because the idea was to promote him. This did not bother me at all. He chose the model (Carol DeHaro) for posing and I took the photos. Then, he drew the preliminary sketch that Warren and Toutain corrected and approved before I created the finished painting. This kind of collaboration between artists was typical of the time, and at the agency, there were many artists who used to create artwork together.

I have been asked many times: "what happened to the original covers that you created for Warren?" These originals were negotiated between the agency and Jim Warren. Once, when I asked for my paintings to be returned to me, I was told that they were owned by Warren, and at the meeting that I mentioned above, almost all artists signed an agreement that they renounced the ownership of their original pages. I say "almost" once more because, as I mentioned before, I was not invited to that particular meeting with Warren. Therefore, I did not sign or negotiate any agreement with respect to my originals, neither did I ever sign at a later date. Thus far, this is how this story goes. But, if I am being perfectly honest, I must admit that if I had attended that meeting with Warren, I'm sure I too would have signed away the rights to my originals. My youth, inexperience, and boundless enthusiasm would have played a key role in that.

Anyway, my thanks to S.I., Warren Publishing, and to so many other American publishers with whom I had the opportunity and pleasure to work.

ENRICH 2013.

Enric Torres-Prat, better known in his Warren days as "Enrich," will forever be associated with Vampirella and his iconic cover paintings have become some the best known images of the character. Enrich began his career in his native Barcelona painting science fiction, crime, and horror paperback covers. However, it was in the 70's with Warren and a host of other publishers that he found the international success his talent deserved. Altogether he created 56 paintings for Vampirella *magazines, books, and calendars—and along with Pepe Gonzalez he is, for many fans, her definitive artist.*

VAMPIRELLA

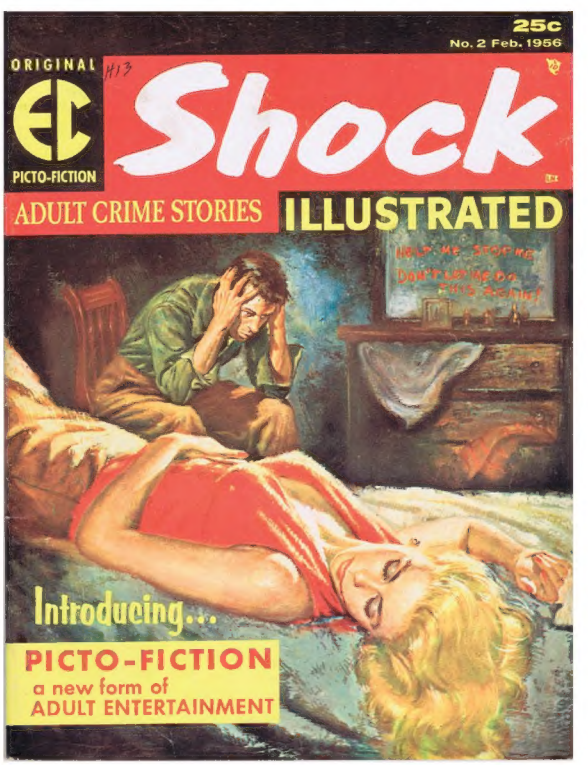
AN INTRODUCTION

BY DAVID ROACH

You never forget your first time. In my case, it was *Vampirella* #66, which confusingly wrapped up a three-part serial wherein our heroine returns to her native planet, Drakulon. As a first issue, it was all rather baffling, but I found the art by Pepe Gonzalez deliciously beguiling as it switched from line to tone and penciled panels. Panels filled with bewitchingly beautiful portraits and arrestingly curved, lithe, sensual figures drawn with an eye that was somehow both academic and intensely sexual. And there it is, the essence of the character burned into her DNA from the very spark of her inception in 1969: sex. There was no avoiding it. It was not simply her costume, which would have seemed provocative even on the beaches of St. Tropez; it was not just in the moments of brazen nudity, which had peppered the strip from its very first page (though strangely Vampirella herself was usually clothed or covered up to some degree). It was there in Gonzalez's drawings, in his every line: a celebration of the sensuality of the human body, a reveling in the rhythms of curves, delighting in the play of light across limbs and flesh. That combination of draftsmanship and eroticism similarly suffused the covers of Enric Torres-Prat, better known to Warren fans simply as Enrich, who was to become the principal cover artist for the series. Heady stuff indeed.

Vampirella was a unique combination of the sexual and the profane: on the one hand the character was a classic slice of cheesecake, eye-candy for teenagers too young to buy Playboy; on the other hand, she was painted by artists steeped in the tradition and techniques of the atelier. The notion of using a painted cover to sell comic books went back to the 1940s, and artists such as George Wilson and Morris Gollub, for instance, had brought great skill and expertise to their many covers for Dell over the years, but Enrich's paintings somehow worked on an entirely different level.

He was, and still is, a tremendously gifted artist. It was fortunate for Warren to have someone who was, by then, working in the far more lucrative world of book illustration, but seemingly happy to paint comic book covers. But there was more than just technical proficiency behind these images: it was that intangible gift for a striking pose or an arresting composition, something that is impossible to define but you know it when you see it. Collectors talk about classic covers, or "grail" pages, artwork that makes a particular impact, which somehow resonates in the mind. Certain artists have a particular gift for iconic images: Vampirella's first artist, Frank Frazetta, was responsible for many unforgettable covers, as were Jim Steranko, Jack Kirby, and John Romita. But somehow Enrich, and his fellow Spanish artist Sanjulián (Manuel Perez Clemente), created memorable, striking

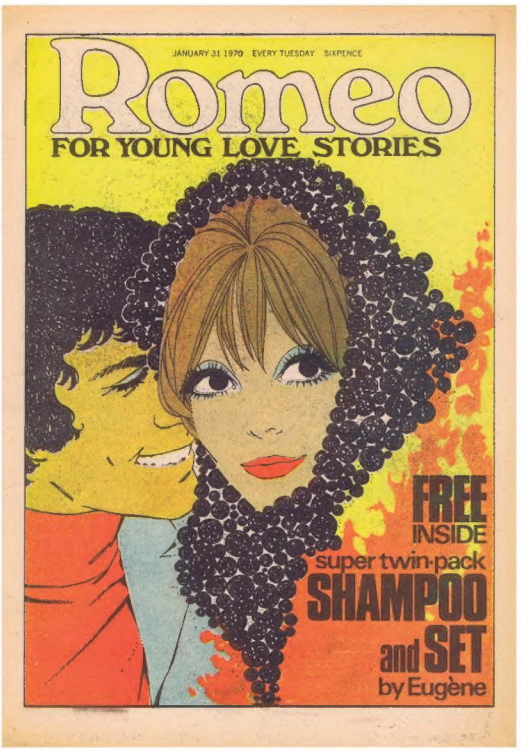


images time after time. This book is a celebration of the many great talents who worked on the comic, painters and pen-men, American, Spanish, Filipino and beyond, but particularly the four great artists who breathed life into the character over the course of her first 14 years: Gonzalez, Enrich, Frazetta, and Sanjulián.

Jim Warren's line of magazines was innovative, influential and responsible for creating or popularizing three significant publishing genres. Firstly, in 1958 with *Famous Monsters of Filmland,* Warren and editor Forrest J. Ackerman created the monster movie magazine. Next, with *Creepy* in 1964, he effectively established a market not only for black-and-white horror titles, but also for comics aimed at a more mature audience. In 1969's *Vampirella*, he has the more dubious honor of introducing the 'bad girl' concept to comics, a genre that is still with us in various forms today. But few innovations are miraculously summoned up out of the ether, and the idea of a comic book in a magazine format had been a holy grail for publishers for some time. With a higher cover price and a prominent newsstand presence, the magazine was always going to be a more profitable format than the 10-cent comic book. Strips appealing to an older audience also guaranteed a readership that would stay with a title beyond the age of ten, so the appeal to publishers was obvious, but early attempts at creating this market were unsuccessful. Lev Gleason was the first publisher to test the waters with the adult comic magazine *Tops* in 1949, but it only lasted two issues. E.C. had been creating intelligent, literate comic books for several years when it launched its line of magazines (in a text-and-pictures format they termed "Picto-Fiction") in 1955 with *Shock*, *Confessions*, *Terror* and *Crime Illustrated*. But while the talent was clearly there, the strips themselves were an awkward combination of text and illustrations, which failed to really engage with the readers. The conversion of *Mad* to the magazine format proved to be far more successful for E.C., and created a space on the newsstands that was soon filled with imitators such as *Trump*, *Panic*, *Sick,* and *Cracked*. In 1959, a pair of obscure magazines, possibly bankrolled by *Cracked* publisher Robert C. Sproul, titled *Weird Mysteries* and *Eerie Tales* appeared on the shelves. These were well-drawn, full-fledged horror comics in a magazine format with painted covers, precisely the format that would prove so successful for Warren five years later. Disappointingly, only one issue of each ever appeared. Clearly, in publishing, timing is everything.

Famous Monsters of Filmland was one of those phenomena that somehow encapsulated the mood of its era. Its mix of knowing humor and unabashed enthusiasm connected with a generation of monster movie obsessives. Here was a magazine that spoke directly to a teenage

BOY FOR SALE
VALENTINE
2 PAGE
24
"NOW'S THE TIME"
IMPRINT
AND THOSE STRONG ARMS OF HIS... SO DOMINATING!
I'M NOW GOING TO KISS YOU, AND THERE'S NOT A DARN THING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!
I COULDN'T ESCAPE, EVEN...EVEN IF I WANTED TO, HARRY!
SO WHY DID HE HAVE TO GO ALL SLOPPY ON ME?
DO GET UP, HARRY! A BIG MAN LIKE YOU DOWN ON HIS KNEES! IT LOOKS SO SILLY!
ANY MAN WOULD FALL ON HIS KNEES BEFORE YOU, MY SWEET LITTLE ROSE!
I KNEW THEN...
HE'LL HAVE TO GO! IF THERE'S ONE THING I CAN'T STAND IT'S THE CLINGING VINE TYPE!
THERE WAS NO DIFFICULTY IN DISPOSING OF HIM...
I...I'D LIKE HIM IF I MAY, JENNY. I'VE ALWAYS LIKED THE HE-MAN SORT.
AND YOU'RE WELCOME TO HIM! SOLD TO MADGE FRASER!
NOW WE COME TO PETER! PETER'S A DIFFERENT TYPE... MORE THE SUAVE, SOPHISTICATED TYPE, YOU MIGHT SAY...
PETER GOT HIS EFFECT A DIFFERENT WAY...
WHAT ARE YOU READING, PETER? IT LOOKS VERY INTERESTING!
BE QUIET, GIRL! CAN'T A MAN HAVE ANY PEACE?
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, JENNY, A WOMAN'S FUNCTION IS TO SIT AND LOOK PRETTY. NOTHING ELSE. REMEMBER THAT IN FUTURE, EH?
Y-YES, PETER. WHATEVER YOU SAY, PETER!
BUT IN THE END, LIKE THE REST...
JENNY, MY LITTLE ANGEL, I CAN RESIST YOU NO LONGER! I WORSHIP YOU, MY DARLING
PLEASE, PETER... NOT HERE! BESIDES, HOW CAN YOU WORSHIP A MERE WOMAN?
A MERE WOMAN? BUT I ADORE YOU, MY SWEET! I WANT TO SPEND MY LIFE MAKING YOU HAPPY... SERVING YOU!
OH, NO, PETER, NOT YOU!
YES, I WAS SORRY ABOUT PETER, BUT...
HE'LL HAVE TO GO! WHO'S INTERESTED IN PETER?
I AM, JENNY! I SIMPLY LOVE THOSE BRAINY TYPES!
ANOTHER DISPOSED OF...
WE'RE ALMOST THROUGH THE LIST! MY FINAL BOY FOR SALE IS ALAN. NOW HE'S ANOTHER DIFFERENT CASE!
IN FACT YOU COULD HARDLY SAY ALAN WAS A BOYFRIEND AT FIRST...
ALL I EVER GET IS A WAVE AS HE GOES BY AT NINETY MILES AN HOUR. STILL, FROM ALAN, THAT'S SOMETHING!
7 5/8"
5624
VALENTINE 28/3/64



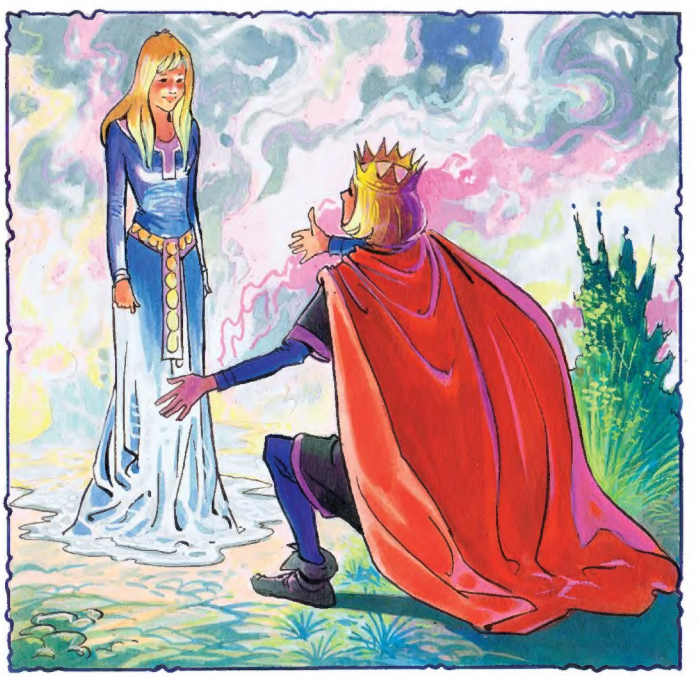
audience raised on midnight matinees and Aurora construction kits, and who were perhaps still pining for the recently departed horror comics of the mid-50's. In broader cultural terms, it sits alongside *Mad Magazine*, The Beats, rock 'n' roll, hot rods, and the surfing movement as early pointers to an emerging counterculture. When *Creepy* emerged in the mid-60's, it was entering a far more receptive marketplace than its pioneering forebears, and for a few wonderful years, the title—along with *Eerie* and *Blazing Combat*—recreated the glory years of E.C. Comics. For this second era of horror comics, Jim Warren, early editor Russ Jones, and editor/writer Archie Goodwin assembled a highly talented group of artists including many of E.C.'s leading stars, such as Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Johnny Craig, Angelo Torres, Wally Wood, Joe Orlando and Jack Davis, along with the likes of Gray Morrow, Neal Adams, Gene Colan and Steve Ditko. Perhaps the company's defining artist was principal cover artist Frank Frazetta, whose stunning paintings so utterly transformed the field of fantasy artwork.

However, despite the undeniably high quality of their magazines, by late 1967, Warren was in serious trouble; its star artists drifted away, publication became less frequent, and reprints began to appear with ominous regularity. Following a downturn in sales and a drain in resources after the company's warehouse moved to New York, Warren Publishing faced an uncertain future. Speaking to *The Warren Companion* in 2001, Jim Warren recalled those dark days: "Nowadays they call it downsizing, but we called it by its real name: cutting staff for survival. We couldn't afford to pay the artists $35 a page. On top of this we changed distributors, which meant additional cash flow problems. Staff was cut to the bone and I took over as editor of all the magazines, picking the scripts, assigning the art and doing all the production. I was working twenty hours a day, seven days a week. Eventually, I found Bill Parente and John Cochran, who came in and did their stints as editors. Had I not found those two great guys I would have collapsed. It was a nightmare that lasted from 1968 to 1970."

Bravely, Warren picked the very depths of this dark period to launch his third horror title: *Vampirella*. "I learned that one from my father. He said, 'when you're down and out and really at your lowest, that's the time to go for the moon,' which is what the company did. It was the worst time to do it. We had no money, no credit line, nothing...except an idea for a female character in my head, sketches in my notebook, Frank Frazetta, Forry Ackerman and Trina Robbins (who was in my office at the right time)." Looking back at the unusual choice of *Famous Monsters* editor Forrest J. Ackerman as writer, someone who, by his own admission, was not a comics

fan, Warren recalls, "We had both seen the movie Barbarella together and had loved it. I carefully outlined exactly what I wanted: a modern day setting, but something with the mystique of vampires, Transylvania, something legendary —and Vampirella was born. I said, 'Forry, I know exactly how she will look, don't worry about that. Her colors will be bright red for excitement and pitch black for mystery. Just give me something I can build on.' And he did, but it wasn't what I wanted, it was too frothy, too light, too satirical, and the only artist I could get was Tom Sutton. In retrospect, Tom's drawing style was not right for Vampi, just as Forry's writing style was not hitting the mark I wanted. The first issue was awful and the second was just as bad; it just wasn't what I wanted."

What set Vampirella apart from Warren's other Warren magazines was something suggested by the legend on the first issues cover: "Captivating Comics About Fantastic Females!" Where *Creepy* and *Eerie* would serve up the horror, fantasy, and science fiction, *Vampirella* was all about pretty girls. That much was clear from Vampirella's costume—part bikini, part fetish outfit—which left little to the imagination. As Jim Warren rightly stated, the two initial installments of the *Vampirella* series itself were deeply unsatisfactory, and for the next five issues of the magazine it was dropped entirely. But with issue eight, Archie Goodwin completely revamped the concept (literally), throwing out the science fiction elements and camp, and scripting and situating it squarely as a horror



strip. Goodwin introduced a recurring cabal of devil worshipers, The Cult of Chaos, as well as Conrad and Adam Van Helsing—the father-and-son vampire hunting team—and washed-up nightclub magician Pendragon, a framework that would sustain the strip for the rest of its existence. Under Goodwin, the feature was at last a credible, engrossing comic strip, but something was still missing. The answer came in the form of an unexpected visitor from Barcelona: Josep Toutain.

One day in 1971, Jim Warren was about to leave the office when his secretary informed him that a Mr. Toutain from Barcelona had come to see him with samples from artists he represented. Warren had a date and was anxious to leave, but reluctantly agreed to see the gentleman for twenty minutes. And so began a meeting that would transform the fortunes of his company completely, as Jim Warren recalled: "In comes Josep Toutain carrying a portfolio (imagine John Carradine with a heavy Spanish accent, only better-looking). He bows and says, 'Mister Warren, I am Josep Toutain, I do not speak English too well, but I represent a group of Spanish artists from Catalonia, Spain. Are you familiar with Catalonia? It is the birthplace of Picasso, Dali, and many other great artists. I have artists who admire your magazines for many, many years, and I have just come from Carmine Infantino and Stan Lee. Now, I would like to show you some samples of art.' I said, 'Oh, you went to them first? That's all right, I understand. DC and Marvel are a little bigger than we are—but before you show me this artwork, tell me: did they buy any of it?' He looked at me very shrewdly and said, 'Not yet. They are thinking about it.' So I thought, 'Okay, let's see what all the fuss is about.'

"He put his large leather portfolio on the desk, opens it up, and I look at two samples of artwork. The first page was an artist named Jose Gonzalez, drawings of women. The second page was by a man called Esteban Maroto, and I don't say anything—I'm not registering an expression. But by the time I was on the third page, I couldn't hold back. I said, 'This is exceptionally fine work. Who are these people?' He said, 'They are the artists I represent. I myself am an artist. Do you know Will Eisner? We correspond.' This tells me he knows comics. So I'm looking at page after page of this incredible art, in a style that was best described as European. Toutain also showed me paintings that he was selling as paperback cover art to Dell and other publishers. I started to ask questions about the art, and Spanish artists. By this time it was 6 p.m. and I had completely forgotten about my date. I kept gazing at this art until I lost my senses. I was staring at the Vampirella artist I'd spent two years searching for. Josep Toutain and I then went to dinner at 8, we negotiated prices, deadlines, and banking arrangements—all before the waiter had served the main course. I had veal saltimbocca, Toutain had filet of flounder, and Vampirella had Pepe Gonzalez to draw her. The company entered a new phase and a new level. It was the new era of the Barcelona artists."

* * *

For many, the period between 1972 and 1976 under editor Bill DuBay is regarded as the glory years for *Vampirella* magazine. It featured the cream of S.I.'s artists, many of whom drew most of their strips for that title rather than *Creepy* or *Eerie*, along with the occasional, gloriously drawn strip by Jeff Jones and Richard Corben. After the 50th anniversary issue, DuBay stepped down as editor to concentrate on his own projects and the upcoming *1984* and *Rook* magazines. He would continue to be a regular writer on the "Vampirella" strip itself for many years, until Rich Margopoulos took over with #90. After Archie Goodwin's departure with issue 16, the strip perhaps lacked the same sense of direction, moving from quite grisly horror under Steve Englehart to more light-hearted, globetrotting fare from Mike Butterworth. Pepe Gonzalez's art was similarly erratic, but as the strips got shorter his work became significantly more impressive. With stories such as "The Sun God" (issue 31), "The Sultana's Revenge" (# 33), and a trio of strips in

1976—"The Human Market Place" (#53), "The Headless Horseman" (#56) and "City of Ghosts" (#57), he revealed himself to be a draftsman of exquisite ability. However, as time went by, Gonzalez's outside interests increasingly diverted him away from the strip, and by 1979 he had left, seemingly for good. His understudy for some years, the reliable and highly detailed Gonzalo Mayo, effectively became the strip's regular artist.

DuBay's successor was Louise Jones, who oversaw a major change at the company with significantly less work from S.I.'s artists and an emphasis on more homegrown creators. Her biggest coup was hiring Bruce Jones—a master of the short story form who became, by far, Warren's best writer—often pairing him with veteran artist Russ Heath, who in turn created some of the finest work of his career there. Not all of her choices were as inspired, however, and there is a palpable sense in the late 70's of the title losing its way. It was her misfortune to preside over a period where so many of the best creators had left the comic. Enrich and Sanjulián were preoccupied with more lucrative book covers, Gonzalez was pursuing his muse drawing portfolios and private commissions, Garcia had moved to France and was engaged in more personal projects, Mas became a fine artist and Fernandez concentrated on work in Spain. Even the prolific Maroto went off to become a book illustrator for Ace. Sales had been strong throughout the 70's, but as tastes changed in the 80's, Warren's magazines, as with horror titles elsewhere, were simply no longer in demand. During that time, *Vampirella* itself enjoyed a creative revival, and although it failed to stem the drop in popularity, it nevertheless rewarded loyal fans with a memorable sequence of issues. Bill DuBay returned in an editorial capacity in 1980, as did Enrich, and the "Vampirella" strip found its last great artist: Rudy Nebres. As the Spanish had retreated, a new wave of foreign talent had come in from the Philippines, led by the unique Alex Nino. DuBay managed to keep the best of the Filipino artists for his *1984* magazine, but Nebres was fast enough to draw for almost all of Warren's magazines simultaneously. His eight Vampi strips were both dynamic and sumptuously detailed, and deserve to be better known by comic fans.

In 1982, *Vampirella* saw both a terminal decline and a creative second birth as a succession of reprint issues alternated with a well-chosen group of back-up features. The original six-issue run of *Pantha* in the mid-70's, by Steve Skeates and Auraleon, was one of Warren's greatest achievements and the character became a regular cast member and solo star (drawn by Jose Ortiz) in the magazine's final years. Auraleon drew the mystical "Cassandra St. Knight" strip, while "The Fox" by Nicola Cuti and Luis Bermejo was a similarly well-crafted series.

Most excitingly for long time readers was the return of Pepe Gonzalez himself for seven new "Vampi" strips (only six of which were printed in the U.S.), which revealed an artist fully reinvigorated and operating at the top of his game. Sadly, the time for black-and-white horror magazines had passed, and despite the company's best efforts, potential readers were simply looking elsewhere. So in early 1983, after fourteen years, 112 issues, one annual, and one color special, *Vampirella*—and Warren Publishing itself—was no more. A bankruptcy sale in the fall of that year sold off the mechanical assets, as well as around 100 original cover paintings, with most of the original artwork vanishing elsewhere. Significantly, however, at that sale, Harris Publishing picked up the rights to the character, and after a false start in 1988 with an all-reprint one shot (#113, now a much sought after rarity among collectors), that company eventually launched a whole new series of color comic books in 1991.

Throughout the 1980's, it was almost as if Warren had never existed, such was the lack of interest among collectors, non-existent coverage in the fan press, a stagnant back issue market and the near complete disappearance of the original artwork. However, Warren

and *Vampirella* had a legacy far wider than just America and Spain—they were kept alive in a new form for many more years. Warren reprints had been appearing in Spanish titles like *Dossier Negro* and *Mata Ratos* from the early 70's and later, *Rufus, Vampus,* and *Vampirella* magazines mixed Warren, Skywald, and DC reprints with the occasional new cover and posters from S.I.'s stars. Josep Toutain had been closely involved in packaging the *Vampirella Special* and *The Odd Comic World Of Richard Corben* for Warren, publishing his own Spanish editions almost simultaneously with the American release. In 1978, he took the plunge and became a full time publisher himself, launching *1984* as the first monthly magazine under his Toutain Editor imprint, which initially reprinted Warren strips but gradually expanded to include new Spanish and international features.

* * *

The character of Vampirella herself similarly had a legacy and an impact that far outlasted her own title. For a time in the 70's, most of the main publishers included their own lines of black-and-white comic magazines and many felt the need to have their own "devil girls." Marvel's Satana was clearly a close relative of Vampirella (even to the extent of hiring Esteban Maroto to draw her second appearance), as was Lilith, and there was little doubt where the inspiration for Atlas' Devilina came from. The Harris *Vampirella* comics were perhaps unfairly seen as spearheading the much-reviled "bad girls" genre: comics starring scantily clad, preposterously bosomed girls aimed at teenaged boys. More interestingly, Vampirella has acquired iconic status in countries around the world thanks to the tireless licensing efforts of the ubiquitous Josep Toutain. Warren and Toutain had an agreement whereby Warren could reprint his strips as often as he liked in America, while Toutain would handle their distribution internationally. David Horne's indispensible 2010 Warren checklist *Gathering Horror* assiduously lists foreign editions of *Vampirella* from eighteen countries, including places as far afield as Chile, Finland, Germany, and Japan. Argentina, Australia, and Turkey seem to have particularly taken Vampi to their hearts with long running series in each country. For its part, Portugal took a unique approach to reprinting by creating their own answer to Vampi: Zakarella, whose text stories, beautifully illustrated by Carlos Alberto, ran side by side with Warren reprints. A few Italian reprints appeared in the 70's but were not long lasting; however, the concept of a sexy vampire or devil girl, a genre created by *Vampirella*, proved to be immensely influential there.

The first notable Italian horror heroine was Uranella, who actually preceded Vampirella by several years, though she was essentially an Italian version of Barbarella with the occasional horror flourish thrown in for good measure. Jakula, a genuinely horror-themed heroine, premiered in 1969 and was followed by an army of devil girls such as Demona, Vampira, Satanassa, Satan Girl, Satanika, Incubi, Jugula, Yra, Cimiteria, Belzeba, Zora, Sukia, Naga, Vampirissimo, Ulula, Horrorella, Misteria, and Lucifera. These were digest-sized, black-and-white titles published by shlock houses such as Edifumetto and Ediperiodici, notorious peddlers of smut and extreme violence. However, while the strips themselves were almost uniformly wretched, their covers were masterpieces of graveyard cheesecake, heavily inspired by (not to say frequently swiped from) Warren artwork. Artists such as Pino D'Angelico, Lele Taglietti and particularly the masterful Alessandro Biffignandi crafted paintings that were every bit the equal of Enrich or Sanjulián, and looked exactly like *Vampirella* covers, albeit with added violence and shameless nudity. So while Vampirella herself did not become quite the success she deserved in Italy, she created an entire genre that lasted for decades.

In recent years, there has been a noted increase in appreciation for Warren's great horror magazines.

The continued success of Vampirella through her new adventures, first from Harris, and now Dynamite, has ensured that new generations of fans are going back to her original appearances. As the original fans matured, entered the job market, and began to earn money, many turned their attention back to the comics of their youth, resulting in increased prices for scarcer Warren magazines as they sought to complete their collections. Many also began to look for original art, particularly the iconic covers, and after decades of nearly complete obscurity, these originals have miraculously started to appear.

Compared to other iconic comic characters, there are relatively few original covers to try and collect, and fewer still actually featuring Vampirella herself. Altogether, Warren published 112 regular issues, plus one annual—two back covers and five unpublished covers make for a total of 120 altogether. But of those 120, twenty-nine don't actually feature Vampi herself (though most are, of course, still highly sought after masterpieces by Frazetta, Enrich, and Sanjulián), eight are reprints or montages and seven are photographs, meaning that there are only actually 76 painted Vampirella images for fans to track down. In the course of writing this book, I have had the good fortune to speak to many of the biggest art collectors in the hobby, and thanks to their generosity, many of the paintings in this volume are reproduced from the original art itself. Jim Warren rightly prided himself on the high production values of his magazines, but as good as his original plates were, they cannot quite match the sharpness and accuracy of modern digital images. Consequently, much of the artwork in this book has never looked so good before.

Warren was one of the first publishers to return artwork to its artists; Frank Frazetta stipulated that all of his covers were to be returned to him, and most of the American creators received at least some of their art back. It was a different situation for the Spanish creators, however, with Jim Warren insisting on storing their artwork in his offices or warehouse. While many of the best Enrich and Sanjulián covers were among the 100 or so originals sold off in the 1983 bankruptcy auction, the rest simply disappeared, along with almost all of the Spanish drawn strips and frontispiece drawings. Over the ensuing thirty years, through auctions, eBay, art dealers, and private sales, many of the covers and strips have resurfaced, including at least half of the strips starring Vampirella herself. However, much still remains hidden away or possibly lost forever; most of the very best Gonzalez strips and over half of his frontispieces are still unaccounted for, as are around a third of the covers. There are a significant number of Torrents and Maroto originals known to be in collections, but far fewer by Mas, Bermejo, Bea, and Auraleon. To date, not a single page by Luis Garcia is known to have surfaced. It is astonishing how many long-lost pages have been discovered over the years, and there remains the chance that these missing strips and paintings may reappear at some point in the future; for now, their whereabouts are frustratingly unknown.

* * *

Today, far from being the long forgotten, dog-eared leftovers, mouldering in dusty dime boxes, Warren's *Vampirella* magazines are seen as classic examples of comic book storytelling and artwork with a unique flavor all their own. For younger generations, they are the enthralling early adventures of a character who continues to delight and captivate to this day. The Warren years still very much resonate today, and hopefully this collection will throw a new light on the art of Vampirella.

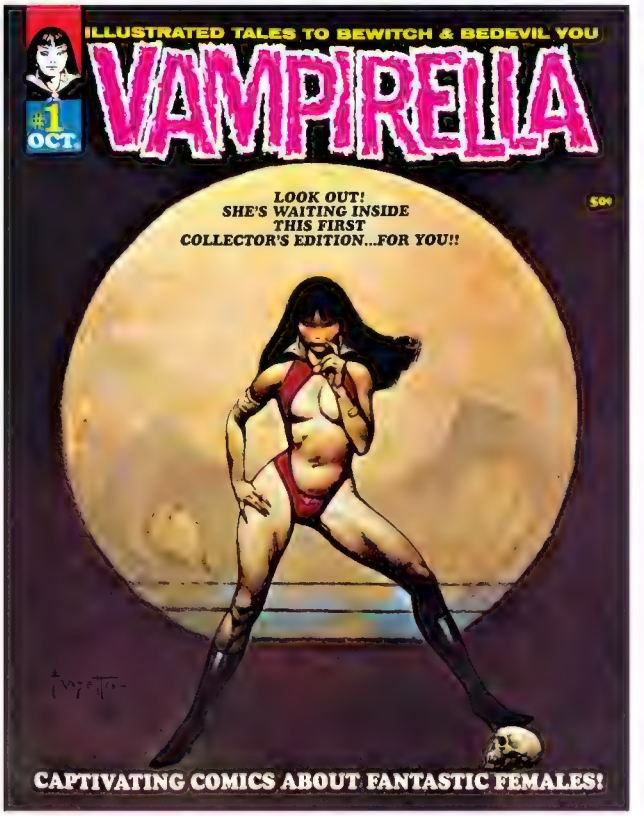
DAVID ROACH,
FEBRUARY 2013.

VAMPIRELLA 1972 ANNUAL, *October 1971.*
Artist Aslan.

With so many conflicting stories about the creation of Vampirella, establishing a precise chronology involves research, study, and a hefty dose of guesswork. What is known, according to a lengthy article in *Vampirella* #19, is that Jim Warren passed an initial sketch to Forrest J. Ackerman and then commissioned Frank Frazetta to create a more refined visualization of the character. While Warren was describing the costume over the phone to Frazetta, underground artist Trina Robbins, who happened to be in the offices at the time, sketched out her interpretation of Warren's description. Upon seeing the drawing, Warren then asked Robbins to describe it to Frazetta, who followed it closely, adding only a few telling details, such as her armband and the bat on her bikini. A legend was born. Coincidentally or not, Frazetta's impression was remarkably similar to a female werewolf he had drawn some years earlier for *Creepy* #7, right down to the haircut and crescent moon earrings. Following the phone call, it would seem that Frazetta created his initial drawings of the character, altogether he would create four beautiful wash drawings and two small head shots, which appeared in the magazine at various stages over the next two years. However, whether all—or only some—pre-date Aslan's painting is not known.

Though reports differ, it would appear that Warren then passed these first drawings on to the French painter and sculptor Alain Gourdon, better known as Aslan, whose provocatively cherubic pin-ups for *Lui* magazine had been appearing in the American *Oui*. From the initial inspiration of Barbarella, Warren envisioned Vampirella as a "living breathing creature in the spirit of the European comic heroine," and Aslan was commissioned to provide precisely that blend of chic sophistication and sexuality. However, Aslan's cover seemingly fell short of the intensity that Warren was looking for. Furthermore, despite being, by most accounts, the very first painting of Vampirella, it took over two years to actually appear in print: in the 1972 Annual. Aslan later contributed several covers to the European titles *Metal Hurlant* and *Totem* in the late 70's (including a captivating bat-girl for *Metal Hurlant* #25), but this remains his only American work to date. Instead, Warren returned to his proven crowd pleaser, Frank Frazetta, who guaranteed the comic would get the attention his struggling company needed.

VAMPIRELLA #1, *September 1969.*
Artist Frank Frazetta.



The current state of this issue's original cover art; re-painted by Frazetta for the 1991 Sotheby's Comic Books and Comic Art auction.

Preliminary cover sketch by Frazetta (image courtesy of Ted Lanting)

The resurfacing of Frank Frazetta at Warren was the most obvious sign that they were beginning to find their feet again, creatively and financially. *The Mongol Tyrant*, which appeared on the cover of *Creepy* #27, was his first new cover for the company in almost two years, though it was, in fact, a slight reworking of an earlier painting. Three months later, he returned with a pair of entirely new pictures, *Eerie* #23's Egyptian Queen and *Vampirella* #1. "The Egyptian Queen" was possibly Frazetta's finest Warren cover; a richly painted canvas, redolent with Renaissance lighting and reminiscent of a chiaroscuro by Caravaggio, which masterfully created an atmosphere of mystery and seduction. By contrast, his Vampirella painting was somewhat uninspired, lacking the personality and charm of his early drawings. The cover showed an awkwardly-posed figure accessorized by a moon, a skull, and the hint of batwings, iconography that reappeared in many of her early illustrations and bore a remarkable similarity to Aslan's rejected first cover attempt.

The issue itself contained seven strips reflecting the diversity of talent the company was able attract at the time. Attractive, but minor, strips by Reed Crandall and Neal Adams rubbed shoulders with emerging stars such as Ernie Colón, Billy Graham, and a handful of less-inspiring efforts. The lead strip was, of course, Forrest J. Ackerman's misfiring first Vampirella, drawn by a young Tom Sutton. It was not without its charms, but was not the start that Jim Warren was looking for. Surprisingly, having expended so much effort in crafting a striking costume, Tom Sutton's first *Vampirella* strip shows her wearing an entirely different outfit, possibly based on Jim Warren's initial sketches rather than Frazetta's definitive version.

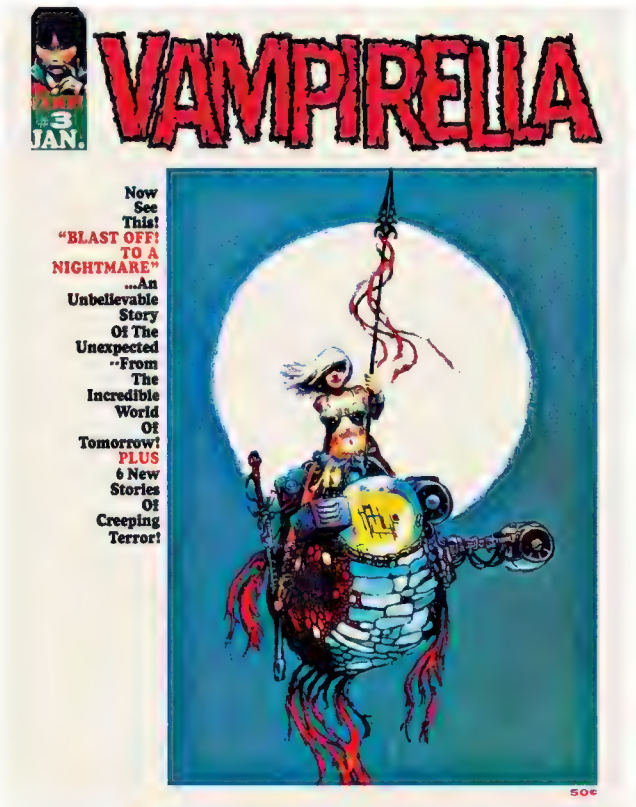
VAMPIRELLA #2, *November 1969.*
Artist Bill Hughes.

Preliminary cover sketch by Hughes
(Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions—ha.com)

Having established Vampirella as a lead strip and short story narrator, Warren inexplicably dumped her from the cover and took the strip in a disastrous direction. "Down to Earth," again written by Ackerman and drawn on this occasion by Mike Royer, saw Vampirella suddenly on earth and entering a monster beauty competition judged by none other than Jim Warren and Forrest J. Ackerman themselves. Renaming her Bambi Aurora, the story was transparently a plug for the upcoming Vampi model kit, which duly arrived in 1971. Perhaps mercifully, Vampirella herself disappeared from the comic (except as a story host) and its covers until issue #8. It is one of the more anomalous aspects of the comic that, despite having such a striking star, she was so often missing from her own covers. In fact, out of a run of 112 issues and one annual, she was only on 81 covers, and several of those were reprints. It is possible that the editors felt that its identity as a horror anthology magazine was more of a selling point than the "Vampirella" feature itself, though the regrettable consequence is the number of potentially stunning Enrich and Sanjulián covers the readership missed out on.

Vampirella guest-starred in this issue's cover feature, painted by Bill Hughes, which introduced her cousin Evily in a marginally more convincing strip, drawn by the great stylist Jerry Gandenetti. Evily would appear only once more, in the following issue, where she is drawn by Vampi artist Tom Sutton. It would seem the story was an attempt to create a supporting cast of macabre female characters, another of whom introduced this issue's Vampirella strip itself: Draculina, who was apparently Vampi's blonde twin sister. For reasons known only to himself, Ackerman later commissioned a painting, believed to be by Albert Nuetzell, which recreated the cover to issue one, but with Vampirella joined by Draculina. This unique double portrait remained in the legendary Ackermansion until the estate was auctioned off in 2009 following the great collector's death.

VAMPIRELLA #3, *January 1970.*
Artists Vaughn Bode and Larry Todd.



Cover preliminary painting by Bode/Todd (Image courtesy of Sotheby's)

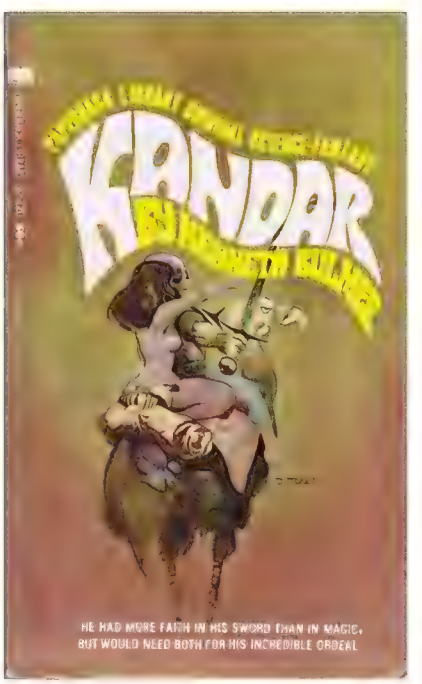
This was the first of seven covers Vaughn Bode would create for Warren in collaboration with a variety of painters. In this case, with his long time friend Larry Todd. Bode was a cartoonist and storyteller who had started out as a book illustrator and prolific fanzine contributor in the mid-60's, soon graduating to the science fiction magazines *If* and *Galaxy*. As the counter culture blossomed, he moved to New York City to work on various underground publications, including the *Gothic Blimp Works*. In early '69, he created his long running "Deadbone" strip for the men's magazine *Cavalier*.

A highly finished preliminary painting shows that the initial version of the cover featured a male character, rather than the female who graced the final cover. Bode would go on to collaborate with Todd on three further Warren covers as well as two paintings for *Amazing* and *Fantastic* magazines in 1972. Bode has said that much of his science fiction work was created first and that stories were then written around them. Here, the cover inspired the strip "Blast Off To A Nightmare," which lead to the bizarre sight of industry veteran Jack Sparling drawing Bode's cosmic slug rider. His imagination conjured up a strange universe of far-off worlds, bizarre creatures, voluptuous maidens, and talking lizards. It remains utterly unique today.

VAMPIRELLA #4, *April 1970.*
Artists Vaughn Bode and Jeffrey Jones.

Bode's second *Vampirella* cover and his fourth Warren following further collaborations with Larry Todd and Basil Gogos for, respectively, *Creepy* (#31) and *Eerie* (#26). His partner for this—and the following month's *Eerie*—was Jeff Jones, who was to have a significant, if infrequent, association with the title. In 1967, Jones had drawn four strips for the company, some of his earliest professional work, and he was returning after having established himself as one of the most popular fantasy artists of the time. While primarily a book cover artist in this period, Jones made sporadic forays into the comics world and came to this illustration within a few months of painting a pair of covers for the short-lived *Web Of Horror* magazine. In the following year, he was to draw two attractive strips and a frontispiece for *Vampirella*, before moving over to Warren arch-rival Skywald, where he painted two stunning solo covers and a pair of highly accomplished science fiction strips.

The painting inspired this issue's "Forgotten Kingdom" strip drawn by Ernie Colón, a Warren mainstay of his period, who was moonlighting from his regular job of drawing *Richie Rich* for Harvey comics. The image of a naked girl riding a strange alien creature echoed a solo Jones cover, painted the previous year for the Kenneth Bulmer book *Kandar*.



Cover art by Jones to Kandar by Kenneth Bulmer *(paperback Library May 1969)*

JONES/BODE

VAMPIRELLA #5, *June 1970.*
Artist Frank Frazetta. Original art 16"x20"

Preliminary cover sketches by Frazetta (Images courtesy of Heritage Auctions ha.com)

Preliminary cover sketch by Frazetta (Image courtesy of Ted Lanting)

That Frank Frazetta very much went his own way during his time with Warren is evident in this cover, which has nothing to do with vampires, horror, science fiction, or fantasy. While wildly inaccurate in historical terms, it is a return to one of the artists favorite themes: the prehistoric world. Indeed, his sketchbooks are full of cavemen being pitted against dinosaurs, mammoths, saber-toothed tigers, or pursuing tempting cave girls. Some sources date the picture to as early as 1966, but whenever it was actually painted, it's clearly one of his quicker pieces; the figures are sparsely painted in tones of gray and the lone tyrannosaur is surrounded by quite broad swathes of paint above it and bare Masonite board below. That said, preliminary sketches that survive do show the artist considering a number of different poses, any one of which would have made a fine cover. It is fascinating to note that once he had settled on a final composition, the finished picture kept to it with remarkable fidelity.

Looking back at his Warren paintings, Frazetta recalled that, "I liked the idea that I could pretty much work for him and do whatever the hell I pleased. So I saw a great opportunity there to do what I like. I'd say, 'Jim, I'll do the work because I love working in a larger format and because you'll stay off my back. I'll do whatever I like, I'm going to shock you from time to time.' And I did, but he didn't care what I did: 'just do it, just bring it in!' I don't actually remember why I stopped doing paintings for him. I didn't have a falling out with the guy or anything. [But] I was getting movie posters to do and getting paid big money; Jim Warren only paid peanuts. Even though I enjoyed doing that material, he was only paying about $250, others were paying me $1000 and $10,000, so how the hell could I work for Warren? It was very difficult."

RAY ETTA ©

VAMPIRELLA #6, *July 1970.*
Artist Ken Kelly. Original art 10"x15.25".
Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

Just as Frank Frazetta helped define the look of Warren magazines in the 60's, so too was Ken Kelly one of the most important artists for the publisher in the 70's. Following four years in the marines, Kelly returned home determined to pursue a career in art. After studying for a year with Frazetta (who was, fortuitously, Kelly's brother-in-law), he was given his first assignment by Jim Warren: *Vampirella* #6. Before taking the finished painting in, Kelly first showed it to Frazetta, who felt the girl's face lacked the intensity of emotion the picture needed, and so painted a new face himself. Jim Warren loved the picture and gave the young artist a thirteen-cover contract. Altogether, Kelly would paint 69 covers for Warren, including seven for *Vampirella*, making him the most prolific painter in the publisher's history.

VAMPIRELLA #7, *September 1970.*
Artist Frank Frazetta. Original art 16"x20"

Frazetta's third *Vampirella* cover—his best for the series so far. Like #5, this was another evocation of the prehistoric world, conjuring up an imagined scene of a priestess, or perhaps a warrior princess, standing side by side with a snarling saber-toothed tiger. Is it perhaps her pet, her familiar, or is it somehow under her spell? We can only guess. Speaking in the 1998 book *Icon*, Frazetta himself insisted that for him it was all about entertaining—creating interesting and exciting imagery rather than any deeper narrative or philosophical content. For its initial printing in *Vampirella*, the painting was heavily cropped and appears in muted, almost grey, tones. The original art is far more vibrant, with the picture positively glowing in its use of reddish earth colors, more than justifying Frazetta's own title for the piece as the "Sun Goddess." The cover was tangentially used as inspiration for a trilogy of strips in this issue written by Nicola Cuti, each dealing with a different witch, drawn by Billy Graham, Tom Sutton, and Ernie Colón.

The Witch Trilogy was introduced by a delicate ink and wash drawing of Vampirella by Frank Frazetta, the last of several such drawings to appear in the magazine. Altogether, Frazetta drew four full figures and two small faces. The first of these drawings, a full figure illustration of Vampirella holding out an arm, appeared in the first issue and was used repeatedly in advertisements and features in the comic, as was a second, seated picture from #5. A segment of another drawing had earlier appeared in the fan club page in issue 4, but would not appear again until #11, which was the only time it was ever printed in full by Warren. This, and issue #7's stunning drawing of Vampirella resting on her elbows, was a far more alluring vision of the character than Frazetta's cover on issue #1, though it's not at all clear when they were drawn. Whether some or all predate the cover, or whether they were even all done together, remains unknown. Frazetta would return to *Vampirella* in the 90's and is known to have created at least 4 new drawings, including one commissioned specifically by Christies, and one final painting for the 25th Anniversary Special.

VAMPIRELLA #8, *November 1970.*
Artist Ken Kelly.

A landmark issue is lead off by what many collectors believe to be Ken Kelly's finest cover for the series. Not only did the painting feature Vampirella—for the first time since #1—but it actually illustrated a pivotal scene from the strip itself, something that would rarely happen throughout the life of the title. More importantly, the cover was evidence that the "Vampirella" strip had returned, and in a credible, completely re-imagined form, courtesy of Archie Goodwin. Dispensing with the tongue-in-cheek sci-fi trappings of the Ackerman origin, Goodwin repositioned the feature squarely as a horror strip. Vampire hunters Adam and Conrad Van Helsing were introduced, as was the Cult of Chaos, an evil, demon-worshiping cabal that would reoccur throughout the strips during the next few years. Kelly's cover is actually an amalgam of two sequences from the story's finale, closely following artist Tom Sutton's tableau of Vampi chained to an altar and adding the later arrival of the great demon Nuberus looming above her (though Kelly's demon is actually based on the Cult of Chaos symbol, rather than the three-eyed colossus that Sutton actually drew).

VAMPIRELLA #9, *January 1971.*
Artist Boris Vallejo (With framing art by Wally Wood)

When he broke into the comics world, Boris Vallejo was widely regarded as the heir apparent to Frank Frazetta, and his subsequent career closely paralleled his illustrious predecessor. After several years in comics, Boris broke into paperbacks, finding fame painting covers for Conan and Tarzan books, gaining a sizeable following in the process. *Vampirella* #9 was the Peruvian artist's first published cover after years of illustration work following his arrival in America in 1964. However, this was, in fact, Vallejo's second cover for the company. The first, featuring a Conan-esque hero battling a harpy, was inexplicably published six months after this issue in *Eerie* #34. Speaking to *Spooky* magazine, the artist recalled his entry into the company:

"I was doing illustrations for advertising at that time, I had to do thirteen illustrations in pen and ink of refrigerators—open refrigerators showing how much food you could put in them. I did not feel like doing them just then, so I bought a canvas panel, some oil paints and brushes, and did the painting of the harpy for the heck of it. My wife thought that I'd lost my marbles! When it was finished, I took it to Warren and he bought it. [Issue #9] was the second and last job I did for Warren. He was to continue giving me more covers, but never did. Actually, he paid me twice for that painting; of course I returned the second check to him. He was very grateful that I did, but I never heard from him after that. Go figure!"

One explanation for the lack of future commissions might have been that Boris had begun to paint for Warren's hated opposition, Skywald, with the first of his five covers for *Nightmare* and *Psycho* hitting the newsstands only a month after this issue.

This issue's split cover was possibly Warren's attempt at incorporating both Boris' full illustration (as a way of avoiding the logo covering Boris' forest sprites) and announcing Wally Wood's beautifully drawn fantasy strip, which appeared in this issue.

BORIS

VAMPIRELLA #10, *March 1971.*
Artist Bill Hughes.

Bill Hughes painted only three covers for Warren, the first two (*Vampirella* #2 and *Creepy* #30) appeared simultaneously in November 1969, while this last illustration followed some 16 months later. Both *Vampirella* covers feature somewhat exotic, slightly menacing females, which in this case was developed into a strip by Len Wein and illustrated by Billy Graham. Although Hughes is a relatively obscure figure in the history of Warren, and comics in general, he would have been a familiar sight on the newsstands of the late 60's and early 70's. Hughes was an occasional contributor to *Cartoons*, a dragster/surfing/cycling cartoon magazine, and a cover artist for *Cycletoons*, where he would typically create paintings based on drawings by cartoonists such as John Bruno, Dennis Ellefson, and Hank Hinton.

Following the upturn in quality in the contents of #9, this issue featured an even more impressive roster of artists including Neal Adams, Ralph Reese, Frank Brunner, and Wally Wood. Tom Sutton was present with a pair of strips, including one that was clearly drawn for *Creepy*, but no Vampirella story, which suggests the story was a last minute replacement, possibly for a missed deadline. Despite this, the issue was a compelling package throughout, and a tangible proof of Warren's creative rebirth.

VAMPIRELLA #11, *May 1971.*
Artist Frank Frazetta. Original art 24"x28"

Frank Frazetta's final cover for the series, and his last to be published by Warren for several years, was also one of his finest achievements for the company. The painting, subsequently titled "Woman With A Scythe," has become one of his best-known images, appearing in many of his art books, and one of the first paintings to be released as a poster by the artist. Early sketches show the artist experimenting with a skull-faced figure, though this was later abandoned. The Jerry Grandenetti-drawn strip "The Green Plague" was loosely based on this painting, though his heroine is noticeably more covered up. Interestingly, the original art was dated 1969, which suggests that it was actually painted before issue #7. It is possible that Warren was waiting for the Grandenetti tie-in to be completed or, since some of the early pictures were not dated when they originally painted, Frazetta might have made a mistake in dating the piece some years later.

Ken Meyer Jr. (artist for DC Comics): "Every Frazetta I saw at that time of my life resonated with me, but this one (like many Frazetta paintings) is seared into my brain. I could almost reproduce it from memory. It has all the best Frazetta touches—a hazy and atmospheric background, a typically realistic but fantastic reptile (two, if you count the sinuous snake), and of course, an incredibly sexy, yet very dangerous-looking, woman. Every young boy's combination of dreams and nightmares. There is also that typically amazing 'caught in the action' body language...no static poses for Frazetta! I cannot count how many times I tried to copy this, and many other florid flights of fancy, from Frazetta. I learned a lot, but I don't think I have yet learned enough to do anything with the mystery, danger, and sexuality that this painting showcases. In the midst of gorgeous covers by Sanjulián, Enrich and others, this one is the black queen of the *Vampirella* cover kingdom."

VAMPIRELLA #12, *July 1971.*
Artist Sanjulián. Original art 15 ¾"x22 ¼"

Possibly the most important issue in the title's fourteen-year existence, issue #12 featured both Sanjulián and Pepe Gonzalez's first work for Warren, and the revitalization of the "Vampirella" strip itself. Though Gonzalez was to scale even greater heights with the feature, his art was nonetheless the mixture of sensuality, atmosphere, and European sophistication, which Jim Warren had for so long been searching. Sanjulián's cover was powerfully stark and mysterious, with the almost silhouetted figure of the dark angel looming over scattered headstones with the seemingly lifeless figure of Vampirella in his arms.

Unsurprisingly, the painting has been used on numerous occasions, including as the cover to the first British edition. Unusually, however, several alternate versions of the image exist and for the Spanish printing (#13), the background was repainted in vivid greens and yellows, with the imposing wings of the angel removed. An entirely new version of the painting also exists, probably dating from the mid-70's. Apparently, Sanjulián's agent, Josep Toutain, wanted to have the original in his collection, but with the painting permanently stored in America, he commissioned the artist to paint a new version specifically for him. The first painting was drenched in ominous, textured hues of green but printed up with a much paler brown background. The second version adopted the paler tonality of the comic, altering the background to billowing clouds of grey and signed with a more florid version of his signature.

Sanjulián: "In my first sketch, I showed the monster with a normal woman, but by mutual agreement, Warren and I, we decided to turn her into Vampirella. The cover sketch was my idea and the script of the story was written about the cover concept, and of course Pepe Gonzalez drew it based on the script. This was my first work in the US, but only two months after starting work for Warren, I also began painting for Dell Publishing."

VAMPIRELLA #13, *September 1971.*
Artist Sanjulián. Original art 15"x19 ½"

Sanjulián's second *Vampirella* cover (which inspired the interior strip "The Silver Thief and the Pharaoh's Daughter" drawn by Jose Maria Bea) was an early example of his evolving personal iconography. Several of his early covers for *Vampirella*, *Creepy* (issues 42 and 46, both of which would have made perfect *Vampirella* covers), and *Eerie* (issues 40 and 41) seemed to take place in his own unique universe, as the artist began to explore the almost limitless possibilities of the fantasy genre.

Sanjulián: "These paintings were entirely from my original ideas. After the idea for each painting was approved, I had no clue where it would be printed, they were not conceived with the idea of Vampirella as a character, they were just 'fantasy' paintings. I would show the painting directly to Warren for approval. [Studio head] Josep Toutain was not involved in the process at all. I was asked to emulate Frazetta, since he was so popular, and it took a lot from me to develop my own style."

VAMPIRELLA #14, *November 1971.*
Artist Sanjulián.

This issue featured another of Sanjulián's iconic fantasy paintings, conjured up entirely from his own imagination, rather than being based on one of that issue's strips.

Sanjulián: "I used to present my finished pieces with my original ideas to Jim Warren and he would accept them or turn them down. I took that risk. In the case of *Vampirella* #14, Warren rejected the background color (earth colors) and I had to change it if I wanted to see the painting published. Warren's insistence on bright colors made me very careful when choosing my palettes, and this restricted me in many ways. I had less of a problem when I would show him a preliminary sketch for a story that was already done."

The painting inspired the Mike Ploog-drawn strip "The Wedding Gift," one of three American-drawn strips, and the last time an issue of the comic would feature that many home-grown artists for several years.

VAMPIRELLA #15, *January 1972.*
Artist Sanjulián.

The third of Sanjulián's fantasy covers for the comic suggests a narrative from a far off time where a warrior queen, or perhaps sorceress, rules a land of savagery and death (note the skeletal guard and the casual way the queen's foot is resting on a bloody, severed head).

VAMPIRELLA #16, *April 1972.*
Artist Sanjulián.

It was perhaps an obvious move, but Archie Goodwin's swan song as writer pitted the plucky Drakulonian against the original vampire himself: Dracula (or at least one of Warren's several versions of the character). Dracula would appear in several more episodes, then graduate to a series in *Eerie* drawn by, amongst others, original Vampi artist Tom Sutton, and finally spinning back over to the *Vampirella* title in a short series drawn by Esteban Maroto. The cover exists in several versions: Sanjulián's original, a later, more fully rendered and larger canvas, and the Kim McQuaite re-painting seen on #81.

Sanjulián: "This painting of Vampirella for Warren was the result of a call I received from Josep Toutain: 'Sanjulián, we need this cover quickly, it is late, but it will be very easy.' Vampirella was chained to an altar and a vampire, ideally the traditional Count Dracula, was attacking. I struggled, but finished it in a few hours. The second painting, because of its frame and size, I think is a recreation of the original, which disappeared years ago. The original painting was quite small in order to finish it faster." Comparing the two Sanjulián versions, the second displays a much richer, warmer palette, while the sacrificial alter and the looming tombs in the background are drawn with much more precision and solidity. Interestingly though, the principle figures are barely changed, showing that even with a quicker painting, Sanjulián absolutely nailed the characters. For the reprinting in issue #81, designer Kim McQuaite painted an entirely new background of a raging sun appearing somewhat inexplicably over Dracula's shoulder. Interestingly, the original cover was one of the few Sanjulián pictures not picked up by Garbo in their Spanish printings of Warren material. The artist has revisited this storyline recently in a terrific new painting depicting Vampirella and Dracula grappling with each other in a stygian catacomb.

VAMPIRELLA #17, *June 1972.*
Artist Enrich.

The first *Vampirella* cover by Enrich (illustrating a scene from Esteban Maroto's "Tomb of the Gods" strip) was far from his first appearance in America. In fact, the artist's first comics work were a pair of covers for two *Eerie* publications (Warren's bitter rivals, run by the legendary Myron Fass): *Tales from the Tomb* and *Tales of Voodoo*. These predated Sanjulián's first *Vampirella* cover, but were actually reprints from Spanish titles. Enrich's first painting for Warren appeared soon after, as the cover to *Eerie* #35, which some have seen as an audition piece for *Vampirella*. However, when his chance came to work for the comic itself, the reaction from readers was overwhelmingly positive.

Jon B. Cooke (co-author of *The Warren Companion*): "Bewitched and bedeviled I was by the first *Vampirella* issue I ever held in my twitchy 13-year-old hands, graced with the superbly designed and exquisitely rendered Enrich cover. Depicting two perfectly sculpted Egyptians being threatened by a giant wolf head (fangs [covered in] blood dripping from its agape jaws), with sharp-nailed human hands (also splattering crimson) reaching from behind a mountain of human skulls, my first was always my all-time fave. Monsters! Mayhem! Heroics! Sex!!! I mean, c'mon! How could a kid NOT become an instantaneous Vampi fan with this sinister and seductive cover?"

Enrich had come to the comic after a decade's experience in a wide variety of genres in his native Spain and across Europe. His work ranged from westerns, romances, science fiction (for *Galaxia*), crime (for the series *Bang Agente 000*), and even superheroes. However it soon became apparent that horror, and beautiful women, were his true forte and he would go on to become by far the most prolific and important *Vampirella* cover artist.

VAMPIRELLA #18, *August 1972.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich's second cover for the comic—and his first chance to actually paint Vampirella herself—saw the artist craft a striking portrait of the Drakulonian, her face seemingly captured in Dracula's mirror. It was an unusual composition for the title, which more typically took every opportunity to show off Vampi's voluptuous physique, and would not be attempted again until its final issue. However, the image soon became one of the strip's most iconic pictures. It was reprinted as the cover of the second Ron Goulart *Vampirella* paperback, numerous foreign editions, and formed the centerpiece of #100's anniversary cover collage.

VAMPIRELLA #19, *September 1972.*
Artists Pepe Gonzalez and Enrich. Original art 11"x32"
Image courtesy of Jim Halperin.

Beginning in 1968, Warren began to release annual yearbooks, which collected together the best strips from the previous year or two. In 1971, the yearbooks became annuals, and two years later they became incorporated into the numbering of the regular series. This issue was effectively the second *Vampirella* yearbook—though the reprints were augmented with a new Vampi strip by Pepe Gonzalez. More significantly, the cover featured an image, which was to become the definitive picture of Vampirella, in an illustration painted by Enrich, but based on a drawing by Gonzalez.

As Enrich recounts in his introduction, the idea for the painting had come from Jim Warren, who wanted a memorable poster of the character, which would also promote Gonzalez's revitalization of the strip. A fragment of what was presumably Gonzalez's initial sketch appeared in issue 16, so this was clearly a picture with a lengthy gestation period. Warren had asked him to paint the cover himself, but Gonzalez was more comfortable using colored pencils and felt unable to create a fully painted illustration. However, Josep Toutain suggested that Enrich could paint the final picture based on Gonzalez's drawing, and with Warren's agreement the collaboration went ahead. Gonzalez signed the painting and the printed cover was credited solely to Gonzalez with Enrich's blessing. This also marked the first appearance of the strikingly beautiful Carol de Haro as a model for Vampirella, and she would continue to appear on covers and in comic strips throughout the 70's.

Pinning down specific release dates after so many years is guesswork at best, but it is entirely possible that the poster and issue 19 were published at the same time. The image was also used as the cover to the 1972 Comic Art Convention booklet, which appeared in July of that year, possibly simultaneously with the comic itself. Over the years, the picture would be repeatedly utilized on puzzles, books, bags, foreign editions, and was also issued as a sticker, which was given away as a premium with the first Spanish edition of the comic. The poster (issued at a life-size measurement of 6 feet high) was on sale throughout the life of the company, and was subsequently reissued several times by Harris. It remains the iconic painting, which Warren always hoped it would be.

Joe Gonzalez

VAMPIRELLA #20 *October 1972.*
Artist Luis Dominguez.

Between 1972 and 1973, Luis Dominguez drew four strips and painted eight covers for Warren, though this issue was to feature his only work for *Vampirella*. This painting was originally commissioned for #18 (as shown in the coming attractions section of #17), but was apparently held back for some reason. The cover is very closely based on a scene from the sword and sorcery strip "Vengeance, Brother, Vengeance!" written by the teenaged Greg Potter—who would go on to become one of Warren's most talented writers—and illustrated by Dominguez himself. The strip is one of the high points of *Vampirella's* early years, and showcases the full range of the artist's techniques: switching from panel to panel between pen-and-ink, pencil, ink wash, dry brush and fully realised painting. The bulk of his Warren work would appear in *Eerie*, though he was in such demand elsewhere that his time at the company was frustratingly brief.

Although he never actually drew Vampirella herself during his brief association with Warren, he has occasionally painted and drawn her in a number of pleasantly whimsical private commissions. Several of his recent paintings have strangely included a saber-toothed tiger, who also starred on the cover of the Harris title *Crimson Chronicles* #4 that finally saw Dominguez's interpretation of Vampirella in print, 30 years after his earlier cover.

VAMPIRELLA #21, *December 1972.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich's first full-figure composition of Vampirella was inspired by a scene from "Slithers Of The Sand," symbolically evoking the life-sapping heat of the desert. The figure was based on a photograph of actress and model Margit Kocsis in what was the first of many covers she posed for, though it is possible that issue #18's earlier portrait could also have been based on her as well.

VAMPIRELLA #22, *March 1973.*
Artist Josep Marti Ripoll.

This uncredited cover was the work of Josep Marti Ripoll, one of the mainstays of S.I., and features a cast made up entirely of members of the agency. Production manager Marcel Miralles and Jorge Sanchez from its sales department posed as the cross-wielding monks; Miralles' assistant Aurora was the beautiful girl with the stake, and agency boss Josep Toutain himself was the main Vampire.

In the early 70's, along with artists Segrelles, Sommer and Fernandez, Ripoll created gloriously outré covers for Emtee's Sweat Magazine titles such as *Men Today* and *World of Men*. However, apart from this sole Warren cover, his only other appearance in the U.S as a comic artist was the atmospheric cover to Marvel's *Vampire Tales* #9, which was in fact a reprint from the fourth issue of *Dossier Negro*. With the exception of the occasional cover for the Spanish *Creepy* reprint comic *Vampus*, Ripoll moved away from illustration in the 70's and assumed the role of artistic director at S.I where he oversaw the design of Toutain's various books and magazines. However, he also had a great gift for calligraphy and many of the strips the studio created for Warren featured his lettering and distinctively bold titles. It is believed that he is also responsible for the final, definitive version of the Vampirella logo, which first appeared on the cover of #13. When Toutain launched his own line of comics in 1978 (with his version of *1984*), he and Ripoll oversaw their design, with Ripoll's title lettering providing one last visual link with Warren. Later on in life, he joined Norma where he similarly enhanced its publications with his strong sense of graphic design.

VAMPIRELLA #23, *April 1973.*
Artist Sanjulián.

When he first started working in America, Sanjulián was widely seen by both Jim Warren and his readership as the natural successor to Frank Frazetta, and this cover is a prime example of why. Like many of his covers for the title, Vampi herself does not actually appear in the painting. Instead, he was asked to illustrate a scene from the Esteban Maroto drawn "Cobra Queen" strip in this issue.

Sanjulián: "They told me to paint an Egyptian Queen for a script that was still being written. I did not know what the story was about, so I took the opportunity to create a painting in a more classical style. No previous sketch was used."

That classic look evoked the cluttered Casbah bric-a-brac of 19th century Orientalist paintings, combined with Renaissance chiaroscuro lighting, and bore comparison with Frazetta's similarly Egyptian themed cover painting for *Eerie* #23 several years earlier.

Sanjulian

VAMPIRELLA #24, *May 1973.*
Artist Enrich.

Vampirella throws her head back in fevered supplication to the crazed bidding of an unholy goat-horned elder god in this classic Enrich painting. Almost inevitably, there is nothing remotely resembling this scene in the corresponding Vampi strip (which is in fact an extended flash back to Pendragon's drunken past), but then that is not really the point with a cover. Covers jump out on the newsstands, they intrigue, they captivate, they titillate and ensnare their unsuspecting victims, something Enrich excelled at. Most Vampi covers were symbolic, or bore only the most tangential relationship to that issue's story, but they absolutely conveyed the essence of the character. Enrich was the master of the arresting image, the seductive pose, the indefinable arrangement of figures, lighting, and colors that somehow resonates in a profound way.

VAMPIRELLA #25, *June 1973.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich's first painting for Warren had appeared on *Eerie* #35, a striking image of a bare chested warrior maiden, triumphantly holding aloft the severed head of her vanquished foe (marvelously modeled on cult B-movie star Tor Johnson). It has been seen in some quarters as a try-out for Vampi herself and was only the second cover by a Spanish artist for Warren. Interestingly, the image was used in the 1977 Warren calendar—the only non-Vampirella painting in the collection—and was picked up at around the same time as the cover to the 9th issue of the French *Vampirella* magazine. A few years later, Enrich painted this cover to issue 25, providing an interesting counterpoint to his earlier picture, as analyzed by the artist and academic Jose Villarrubia:

"A champion holding up the decapitated head of his adversary in triumph is a well-known art history subject, first popularized in the Renaissance by Benvenuto Cellini in his bronze sculpture, *Perseus Holding the Head of Medusa,* and the many representations of David holding the head of Goliath. A muscular warrior fighting lions has also been a common theme in Western art, primarily through the many depictions of Hercules fighting the Nemean Lion. These classical echoes inform the cover painting of *Vampirella* #25 by Enrich. This image is unique among the series. The previous twenty-four covers featured sexy depictions of women, mostly the title character herself, and after this one, no other cover featured a single male figure. Jim Warren asked illustrators to emulate Frank Frazetta, who had defined the Warren cover 'house style.' Enrich certainly complied here, in the overall look of the image and the orange sun and faded background, reminiscent of Frazetta's otherworldly landscapes. But the figure is unmistakable Enrich's. He applies in it the same combination of realism and painterly qualities that he used in his many splendid depictions of Vampirella. Like his women, this man looks slightly contemporary in an otherwise fantastic context. Enrich had already used the same basic concept in an earlier painting (*Eerie* #35), but with a gender switch that made it evoke Salome instead of Perseus. Unlike 'Nimrod,' this female warrior was posed in *contrapposto* to accentuate her curves."

VAMPIRELLA #27, *September 1973.*
Artist Enrich.

One of the great attractions of Warren's magazines were their stunning painted covers, which is why it was so disappointing to see #26 featuring a cover collage of interior panels rather than a glorious new Enrich or Sanjulián masterpiece. Thankfully, the following issue, a mostly-reprint 1974 yearbook collection, featured one of Enrich's most memorable images, a cover that clearly reflected the popular Gothic Romance genre.

Both Enrich and Sanjulián painted numerous Gothic Romance covers so it is a surprise that this is the only truly Gothic *Vampirella* cover. Typically the Gothic illustration features a wild-haired girl, her luxurious dress rippling in the wind, looking warily over her shoulder at a sinister house in a desolate landscape. This stunning Enrich cover fulfills most of the criteria for a classic genre cover with the sole exception of the dress; our intrepid Drakulonian, seemingly oblivious to the chill of the night, is out on the windswept hill dressed only in her trademark bikini.

VAMPIRELLA #28, *October 1973.*
Artist Enrich.

Throughout the early 70's, Warren's distinctive contents pages included a tiny reproduction of each issue's cover, together with a short commentary on the painting. For this issue it read: "From out of the slime it comes! The monster who has tread the waters of Loch Eerie for two hundred years. It hungers for fresh human flesh. It hungers for Vampirella." All of which might lead readers to suppose that the near naked figure shivering in her panties was Vampirella herself. She certainly looked like her, and it's entirely possible the staff at Warren might have believed it was her as well. In fact, as it unfolds in the strip, the victim was an 18th century Scottish maiden, stripped and left on the banks of the Loch as an offering to the hideous creature rising from its depths. Some years later, Enrich recreated the scene for a private collector with the costume painted in, resulting in the painting that many fans had expected in the first place.

VAMPIRELLA #29, *November 1973.*
Artist Enrich.

After the previous issue's slightly misleading cover, this time around Enrich presented us with the real Vampirella menaced by the cursed progeny of the Macdaemons. On this occasion, the painting closely mirrors the scene inside, which does indeed take place deep in the depths of the Loch (and yes, the strip reveals that Vampi can breathe underwater).

VAMPIRELLA #30, *January 1974.*
Artist Enrich.

Carol de Haro once again models for one of Enrich's most iconic covers, with Vampirella caught mid-transformation, reassembling herself into human form with her leathery bat-wings still stretched out behind her. Enrich was a keen photographer with a strong sense of composition and it is striking to see how closely he followed the original source material for this painting. Every subtle tonal shift, each outreached finger, the way the light plays across the model's face, are all painstakingly recorded in the finished painting. The image was later included in the 1977 Warren calendar and has appeared on numerous foreign editions, including the first issues of the Spanish and Swedish *Vampirella* comics. Warren's design department added the distinctive tombstone-shaped border—a framing device, which had first been introduced three issues earlier and would reappear again in issues #50 and #59.

VAMPIRELLA #31, *March 1974.*
Artist Frank Frazetta.

A cheap 60's Italian jungle girl movie might seem a strange choice to adapt for a comic about vampires, but when the opportunity came to feature a new Frank Frazetta cover, Jim Warren jumped at the chance. The movie was *Luana*, a cheap Tarzan/Sheena knock-off starring Mei Chen and Glenn Saxon, which had been picked up by Capital Productions for a 1973 re-release. Realizing the film needed all the help it could get, the company hired Frank Frazetta to paint two movie posters and a smaller teaser illustration. The main poster, a stunning painting depicting Luana surrounded by a lion, a panther, and a chimp was also utilized as the cover of Alan Dean Foster's novelization, and was offered to Warren to accompany their comic book adaptation of the film. In an unprecedented move, the cover itself had been promoted in the previous issue of Vampirella by a Neal Adams line drawing of Frazetta's painting, acting as a tantalizing preview of the picture's grand unveiling. In the end the film was a dud, of course, and the comic strip adaptation was fine, but nothing special. However, Jim Warren got his Frazetta cover and that is all that mattered.

VAMPIRELLA #31 ALTERNATE COVER.
Artist Enrich.

Recently, a proof copy of an entirely different cover to #31 has surfaced from the collection of long time Warren art director Bill Mohaley (printed in the fanzine *Spooky* Volume 2 #4).

Speculation around its existence has led some commentators to believe that it must have been an uncommissioned painting by Enrich, which was sent to Warren on spec. However, the Eifel Tower in its background shows that it was clearly painted to accompany that issue's Vampi story, which was set in Paris. Presumably, once it became clear that there was the chance of running a previously unseen Frazetta painting on the cover, Enrich's original picture was unceremoniously cast aside. The Vampirella figure was printed soon after, stripped of its background, as the back cover to #37, and Vampi's face was used in the corner box on covers for the rest of the year, but the full artwork itself was never used by the company. It was a different story in the rest of the world, however, as the artwork was first used as the cover to Garbo's *Vampirella* #31 in Spain and later appeared in Germany and Turkey. Enrich has also used the same pose again in a cover for the long-running Spanish science fiction magazine *Nueva Frontera*.

VAMPIRELLA #32, *April 1974.*
Artist Enrich. Original art 9.5"x10".

A poignant scene from the *Vampirella* story "Running Red" is the inspiration behind this cover by Enrich. The painting illustrates the surprisingly tender denouement to the story, as an ancient riverboat gambler who sold his soul to the devil finally decomposes into his true, skeletal form. Enrich's original artwork was reversed for publication and its unusually small size and minimal background suggests it might have been produced as either a very tight preliminary or a quick painting done in order to meet a deadline.

VAMPIRELLA #33, *May 1974.*
Artist Enrich.

A landmark issue that saw Pepe Gonzalez finally reveal himself as the master craftsman he always had the ability to be, but up until this point had only occasionally suggested. Mike Butterworth's script for "The Sultana's Revenge" was a typically frothy travelogue set in a fictional Arabian state, complete with harems and djinns, but for whatever reason it inspired Gonzalez to produce artwork that was stylish, sexy and astonishingly realistic. One panel in particular, a pensive portrait of the treacherous Sultana rendered in wash and pencil, inspired a number of wildly enthusiastic letters. Enrich's cover, apparently modeled by Margit Kocsis, was similarly memorable though quite clearly had little to do with the story itself. Vampi does indeed spend part of the story locked in a dungeon, but her opponent is the unspeakably hideous djinn (whom she dispatches with bloodthirsty efficiency), not a gargantuan spider. With painting of this quality, however, it's doubtful there were many complaints.

VAMPIRELLA #34, *June 1974.*
Artist Enrich.

One of the best issues of *Vampirella*—with one of the most memorable "Vampirella" strips—is introduced by a cover painting, which only tangentially relates to the strip inside. The story itself, "Carnival of Death" features an aging couple whose dinner party is gatecrashed first by a band of debauched hipsters and then by the reanimated corpses of ancient Venetian aristocrats. The cover juxtaposes a smoldering pin-up shot of Vampi against a group of zombies rising up from a spectral graveyard, which is clearly anywhere but Venice, but is at least suitably atmospheric. It is seemingly two illustrations combined to make one, as the top left of the cover features a superimposed painting of Vampirella looking scared as a corpse stumbles ever closer. This extra panel is missing from the original, with nothing to suggest it was ever part of the composition as Enrich imagined it. Interestingly, the corpse in the small panel is identical to the main background figure in the bigger painting. Enrich has used two different models here as well; the main figure is based on Carol de Haro, while the smaller panel features Margit Kocsis. It is possible that the panel is, in fact, an earlier version of the cover which was rejected in favor of a full figure shot (indeed, after his portrait in issue 18, Enrich was to paint full figure studies on each of his subsequent covers) and rather than see the painting go to waste, it was decided to include it on the cover anyway. A further twist is the reappearance of the lead zombie on Enrich's cover to *The Monster Men*, an early 70's paperback from Ace.

VAMPIRELLA #35, *August 1974.*
Artist Enrich.

A sultry, dark haired vampiress beckons from her red-draped throne in one of Enrich's finest paintings. The Vampirella look-alike is so bewitching that we don't at first see the scattered body parts strewn at her feet. The cover nominally illustrates a scene from the Auraleon-drawn "The Night Ran Red With Gore," which featured a mother-and-daughter vampire team fleeing from a determined vampire hunter, but in truth there's little obvious similarity between the two. For its reprinting as the cover to Garbo's Spanish *Creepy* a few months later, an in-house production artist rather convincingly added a Vampirella costume and subtly changed her hair style to create another striking Vampi "painting that never was."

VAMPIRELLA #36, *September 1974.*
Artist Sanjulián.

In 1973, Sanjulián painted a pair of posters that featured Uncle Creepy and Cousin Eerie, set against a stark white background, which have since become widely seen as the definitive portrayals of the characters. A year later, a similarly iconic third poster was published starring Vampirella, an image that appeared more or less simultaneously with the cover of issue #36 of her magazine, though that painting included a playing card frame. Some collectors have wondered if it was originally conceived as a poster, but according to Sanjulián its origin was entirely different.

Sanjulián: "I showed Warren this Vampirella painting as a sample for 'Poker Game.' It was Vampi as the Queen of Hearts. THEY ENDED UP USING THE SAMPLE AS A COVER!"

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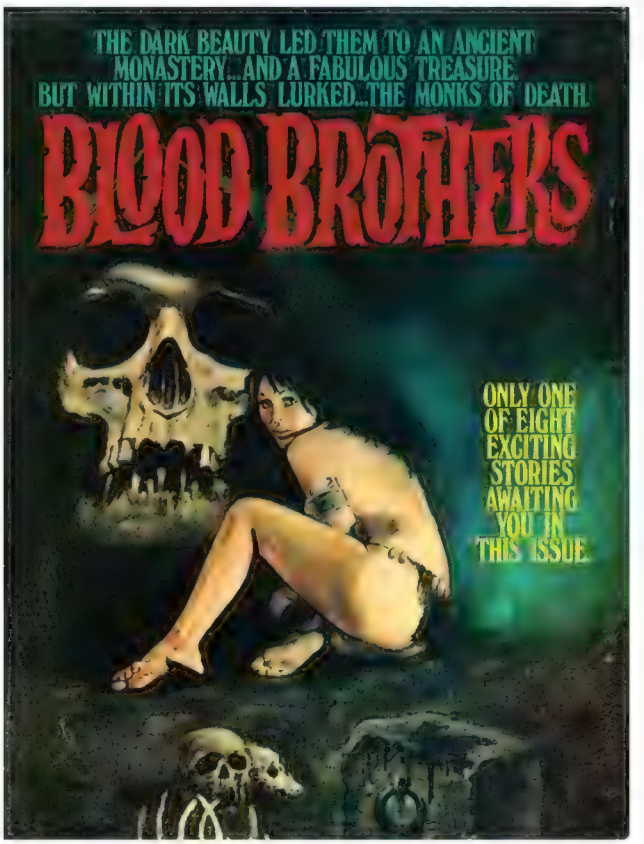
VAMPIRELLA #37, *October 1974.*
Artist Enrich.

One of Enrich's finest covers, though miscredited to Sanjulián, this was the last issue to feature Carol de Haro as a Vampirella model. The question of whom Warren's artists based their beautiful girls on was a recurring theme in the company's letters pages and the usual reply was that they simply used their imagination. However, this was not entirely true: Carol de Haro was a muse to many of the Spanish artists who used her as an inspiration for numerous strips and covers.

VAMPIRELLA #37 BACK COVER.
Artist Enrich.



Warren must have been awash with paintings in 1974, as several issues of all three Horror titles featured illustrations, which had clearly been commissioned as front covers, unceremoniously dumped to the back of the comic. *Creepy* relegated somewhat gory pieces by Albert Michini and Sanjulián (in issues 65 and 68) to its back cover, while *Eerie* had three pieces from Sanjulián, again, Bernie Wrightson, and Ken Kelly (issues 59, 60 and 63). *Vampirella* had utilized an unused cover as the back of issue #36 and in the following issue it happened again, with this classic example of Enrich artwork. The concept of a barbarian or slave girl cowering in front of a skull was broad enough to have graced the cover of any Warren comic, so it seems perversely wasteful not to have made the most of it.

This was the fourth *Vampirella* yearbook, which as usual mixed a collection of reprints with a new "Vampirella" story, in this case the Gonzalez drawn "She Who Waits." Among the reprints was Esteban Maroto's "Cobra Queen" from #23 and rather satisfyingly the queen reappeared in the Vampi strip itself. Enrich's front cover chose to show the queen in her cobra form (surrounded by the obligatory skulls), but the character had already been attractively painted by Sanjulián on the cover to #23. In fact, Sanjulián's earlier cover to #15 can also be seen as an early inspiration with its regal looking matriarch, complete with a cobra rearing up over her shoulder. Ken Kelly's swamp woman in #70 was a similarly striking creation as she rose up out the mist with a giant, striped snake writhing around her. Original artist Maroto finally revisited the concept in issue #93's "Cobra Goddess," which was set in the days of the English Raj in India.

VAMPIRELLA #38, *November 1974.*
Artist Sanjulián. Original artwork 16"x21.5", oil on canvas.
Image courtesy Heritage Auctions *Ha.com*

Throughout its existence, Warren had expanded the boundaries of what a horror story could be; from the deconstruction of the urban sniper in "Thrillkill" to Pantha's walk on the wild side of life among the outcasts of society. But there was also always room for a tale as traditional as this issue's "Vampirella" yarn, "The Mummy's Revenge," a romp through the catacombs of Rome, complete with Egyptian gods and reanimated corpses straight out of Hammer films. For this richly painted cover, Sanjulián manages to work in some beautifully authentic Egyptian garments and jewelry, a sinister hooded figure and a menacing hand reaching out from the tomb.

Sanjulián: "For a long time I painted covers for *Creepy* and *Eerie*, but not *Vampirella*. They needed me to work on this painting in a hurry, as usual, due to internal problems between the agency and Jim Warren. The result was not too bad."

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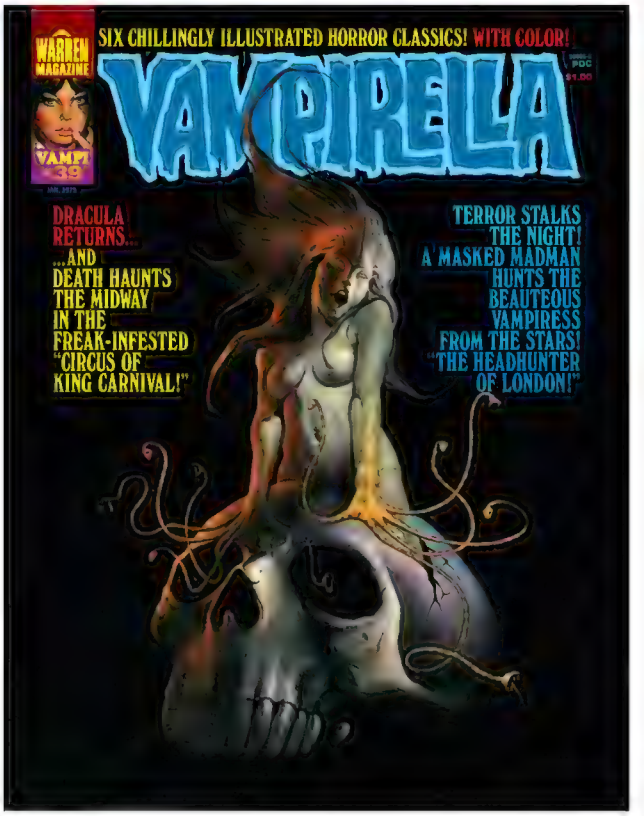
VAMPIRELLA #39, *January 1975.*
Artist Ken Kelly.



Ken Kelly's unusual cover inexplicably replaced Jordi Longaron's illustration of a scene from this issue's "Vampirella" strip, "The Head Hunter of London." Longaron's painting had originally been commissioned for #39, but remained unpublished for many years before finally seeing print in issue #96.

VAMPIRELLA #40, *March 1975.*
Artist Enrich.

A nearly naked girl cowers in front of a mysterious hooded figure, lit up by a fiery sunset in one of Enrich's most enigmatic covers. It might conceivably relate to a scene in this issue's "Vampirella" story where a pair of, as the text puts it, "insane hags" summon up the hooded "nameless ravisher," though neither the old women nor the skeletal ravisher exactly resemble the cover stars. It was to be the last time for several years that Enrich would paint a cover without Vampirella herself on it, though typically the cover girl is a dead ringer for Vampi. That December, readers of the Spanish *Vampirella* got to see an alternative version of the cover, with an in-house artist at Garbo very effectively adding a Vampirella costume to the frightened girl (though forgetting to add her boots in).

VAMPIRELLA #41, *April 1975.*
Artist Enrich.

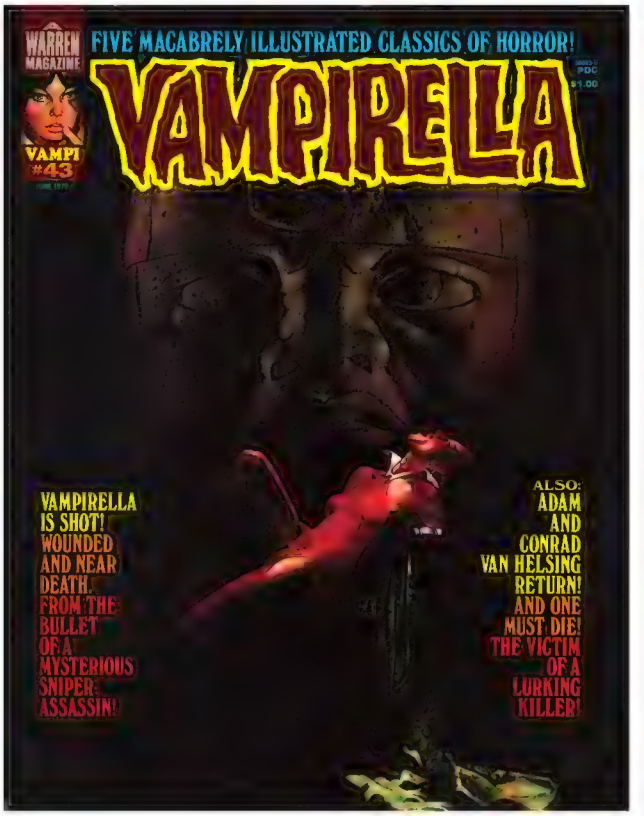
In traditional fantasy artwork, women have been depicted in one of three ways: as the vamp, the victim, or the vixen. The latter would typically take the form of a barely-clad maiden wrapped around the legs of a stern looking barbarian (a perennial fixture on Conan comic book covers, whom writer Roy Thomas wittily named "Miraaj"). Despite her miniscule costume, Vampirella was fundamentally a strong, independent character—a genuine rarity among 70's comic book women—and something of a feminist icon in some circles. She is the very personification of the vamp, literally in her case: alluring, mysterious, commanding, and with a slight air of menace. Yet on numerous covers, this supremely assertive character was portrayed as the victim, menaced by monsters, trapped, bound or cowering in fear.

Enrich's cover to *Vampirella* #41 is a quintessential example of the heroine as victim, clinging in terror to a gravestone, eyes staring at some unseen menace approaching stage left. It is one of the artists most fully realized paintings with a wonderfully atmospheric and highly rendered graveyard setting.

VAMPIRELLA #42, *May 1975.*
Artist Enrich.

It is always fascinating to see the editorial decisions that go into designing a cover. In this case, Enrich's cover painting was reversed for publication—like a mirror image—for reasons that seem obscure now, but at the time were probably agonized over, at length. Ironically, by reversing the image, Warren was matching it to the original reference photo of Margit Kocsis, which was flipped by the artist in the first place. The reversed image had also been the inspiration three issues earlier for a frontispiece drawing of Vampirella by Enrich's close friend Pepe Gonzalez, one of many similar illustrations that were to become such a distinctive feature of the comic.

VAMPIRELLA #43, *June 1975.*
Artist Lluís Ribas.



Today, Lluís Ribas is one of Spain's most respected fine artists, with numerous shows to his name. But back in the 1970's he was an integral member of the staff at S.I. This was his only cover for Warren.

Lluís Ribas: "For my part, I did black-and-white illustrations and an occasional color cover for Europe, but I did it for my multifaceted spirit and to get me a bonus, since my ultimate goal was to paint. But since I was very young (23 years old) and I always liked challenges in life, the challenge was to get a cover published in *Vampirella*; and soon I got it. At that time, I was in charge of the photo lab at S.I. One day, taking pictures of models, I thought one of the girls was the perfect Vampirella. I took some photos, painted the cover and showed it to Toutain. He liked it and sent it to Warren. Jim, who already knew me because I had made a copy of a picture in his private collection, published it immediately and was surprised that I did not do more work for him."

VAMPIRELLA #44, *August 1975.*
Artist Sanjulián.

A puzzling anomaly among *Vampirella* covers, this was the first issue to feature a male star since #25, and appeared to have been commissioned for an entirely different title altogether. Which it was.

Sanjulián: "The panting was based on the actor Werner Krauss from an old horror film of his, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. It was intended as a cover for the magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. I do not know why it finally appeared in *Vampirella*, it was Jim Warren's editorial decision."

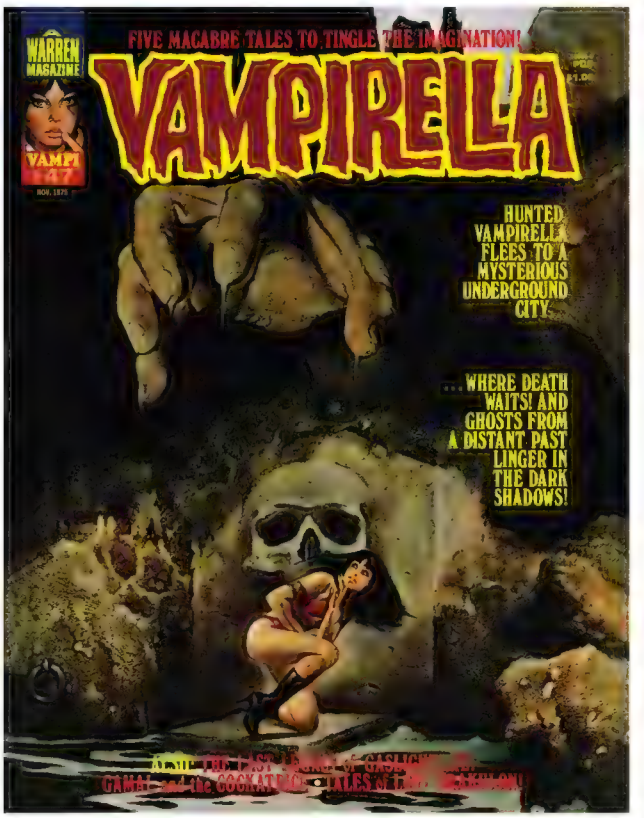
One of Sanjulián's earliest Warren covers had been a portrait of Boris Karloff's Frankenstein for *Famous Monsters* #94, but for many years, the magazine's regular cover artists were Ken Kelly and Basil Gogos, and the artist only had one further cover painting used on the title (#185). An article about *Dr. Caligari* appeared in *Famous Monsters* #110 in 1974 so it is likely that the painting had originally been intended for that issue, but was ultimately replaced by a more dramatic Gogos illustration. The 1920 film *Das Cabinet Des Dr. Caligari* was directed by Robert Wiene and is considered to be one of the landmark films of German Expressionist cinema. The central figure on the cover is based on a still from the movie, but its background has none of the surrealistic settings or bizarre perspectives of the film. Instead, Sanjulián has created a starkly primitive laboratory scene containing a Frankenstein-esque creature, apparently modeled on Boris Karloff, with an anatomical drawing inspired by Leonardo Da Vinci on its wall. It would seem that rather than let the cover go to waste, it was decided to use it on *Vampirella*, possibly as a substitute for a late cover, irrespective of how appropriate that might me. Fittingly, in the rest of the world, it was used on other titles, such as *Vampus* in Spain, but not on *Vampirella* itself.

VAMPIRELLA #46, *October 1975.*
Artist Ken Kelly.

This year's *Vampirella* special included a new strip drawn by Zesar, but was predominantly a reprint collection that featured a completely rewritten version of her origin story from the 1972 annual. Ken Kelly's cover illustrates the fateful moment from that story when a crew from earth discovers Drakulon, with the artist substituting his own more modern looking spaceship for Pepe Gonzalez' clunkier original. 1975 was an incredibly productive period for Kelly, he was firmly established as one of Warren's principal cover artists and had an astonishing 23 paintings printed by the company that year.

Speaking to *Spooky* magazine, Kelly recalled his time working for Warren: "The way the process worked was I had a daytime job and during my lunch hour, I would take a train right into the offices of Warren to see Bill DuBay. He had the comic pages laid out on the desk and said, 'Pick two or three of these.' So I would see what the artist was doing, pick a cover, go home, paint it, bring it back in Monday morning. On the weeks where I had an idea [of my own], I would take a little drawing or painting, and show him the rough. If they liked that, then I would go home and paint it. And that was my life for five years until KISS came along." With the success of his KISS album covers and a burgeoning career in paperbacks Kelly's workload for Warren was reduced enormously, painting eleven covers for them in 1976 and only four the following year. But he remained loyal to the company that had first brought him to prominence and would continue to paint for them until they stopped publishing.

VAMPIRELLA #47, *December 1975.*
Artist Enrich.



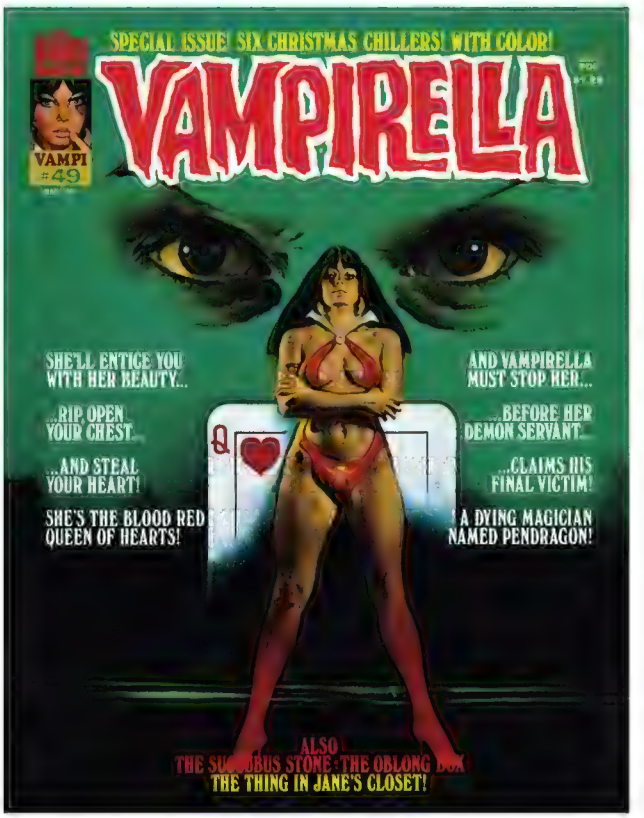
A painting that contains tributes within tributes, puzzles and mysteries. The first puzzle comes from the cover's text that states: "Hunted, Vampirella Flees To a Mysterious Underground City," which actually refers to an eccentric strip that was printed the following month. This issue's "Vampirella" strip, "Mother's Coming Home," beautifully drawn by Gonzalo Mayo, was actually an intense, small-scale psychological vignette focusing on an insane young girl. Neither story bore any resemblance to Enrich's cover, which imagined a scene that was never to appear in any *Vampirella* story.

In fact, the cover is based on a painting from 1901 called "The Tomb of Arnold Bocklin," by the German artist Ferdinand Keller. Enrich has added the looming, granite-like hand, a skull carved from a stone wall and Vampirella's tiny crouched body, but the background is essentially a section of Keller's painting. The appropriation is rather fitting however, since Keller's painting was inspired by—and created in tribute to—the then recently deceased painter Arnold Bocklin, who was himself famed for his morbid paintings of remote islands. Bocklin's most famous painting, "The Isle of the Dead" was so popular that he painted five versions of it so even he himself was not averse to a bit of creative appropriation. The concept of "The Isle of the Dead" has proven to be a constant source of inspiration to each generation, and its imagery can be seen in numerous paintings, books, films, and comics. Not only Enrich, but creators as diverse as Salvador Dali, Val Lewton, Roger Zelazney, H.R. Giger, and Moebius have fallen under its spell. Vampirella was in good company.

VAMPIRELLA #48, *January 1976.*
Artist Enrich.

This was another example of Enrich's quirky, inventive mid-70's covers where he was moving away from strictly representational compositions towards something more surreal. Here, a tiny Vampirella is trapped in what looks like a perfume bottle surrounded by rats; a scene that seemingly sprang entirely from the artist's imagination.

VAMPIRELLA #49, *March 1976.*
Artist Enrich.



Every great comics character needs a nemesis, an archenemy as memorable and fascinating as the star him- or herself. Vampirella had survived several encounters with the Cult Of Chaos and Dracula, but it was not until this issue that she had an opponent that was particularly distinctive or unique. That was until the creation of the Blood-Red Queen of Hearts by writer Bill DuBay. Enrich's cover tantalizes rather than reveals: Vampirella stands defiantly against a sickly green background, observed by a piercing pair of eyes, belonging to whom? We do not know. The Queen of Hearts playing card is a clue to her opponent's identity, but also reflects back to the cover for issue #36, except in that case Sanjulián envisaged Vampi herself as personifying the Queen.

VAMPIRELLA #50, *April 1976.*
Artist Sanjulián.

Anniversary issues are often something special in the comics world, and this 50th issue is definitely a landmark in the history of the comic. Sanjulián's cover was suitably monolithic and imposing, with Vampirella fighting Pantha (in her first cover appearance) on a desolate-looking crag set within a tombstone-shaped border. In fact, both characters could almost be formed from the cold chunk of granite they are perched on in what is an almost sculptural illustration. It is fascinating as well to compare Sanjulián's highly finished preliminary drawing with the published cover, noting how closely he followed his initial visualization.

SANJULIAN

VAMPIRELLA #51, *May 1976.*
Artist Sanjulián.

Though few could have known it then, this was the last time Sanjulián was to paint Vampirella for many, many years, as his burgeoning paperback career took up even more of his time. The cover itself was an eerily-lit scene redolent of something from the Arabian Nights, complete with crystal ball and genie lamp. The "Vampirella" strip it was ostensibly illustrating was set in contemporary France and featured decaying zombies rather than Eastern mystics. But, as is so often the case, the whole point was to catch the eye of the passing customer, and this painting would certainly have done that.

VAMPIRELLA #52, *July 1976.*
Artist Enrich.

Jim Warren knew he had something very special when the original art to this issue's cover came in; it was quickly rushed out as a poster, one of only a few *Vampirella* covers to be given that privilege, and later that year it was utilized as the cover to the 1977 Calendar. The image of Vampirella's voluptuous figure, crouched on the floor reaching out to the viewer is one of Enrich's very finest paintings and a startlingly provocative display of sexual allure. Unusually, the original art was far taller than the usual dimensions for a cover painting and the circular motif behind the main figure is repeated by two further decorative circles at the top of the illustration. They serve to create a balance and sense of depth in a composition that otherwise has a simple graduating tone of brown as its background. However, these top two circles are mostly cut off on the printed cover and the full painting has remained unseen until now.

Warren had long been fond of recycling old material in yearbooks or all reprint collections, and this occasionally extended to covers as well. The first issue of Vampirella to feature a reprinted cover was #45. It took the figure from issue 19 and surrounded it with parts of other paintings to create an entirely new cover. A year later, #55 had simply added a black border to the painting from #36 and removed the original playing card section. For *Vampirella* #81, the art department made a print of Enrich's painting for #52 and sent it to Barcelona where the artist carefully painted over his original background with white paint, signed it and sent it back, creating a much starker, simpler image. This new illustration has since been used as the cover to *Vampirella* collections in Germany and Japan and in some ways has become more famous than the first version of the cover.

VAMPIRELLA #53, *August 1976.*
Artist Enrich.

One of Enrich's most iconic covers, this image appeared almost simultaneously as the cover to the fifth Warner Brothers' *Vampirella* paperback and as a plate in the 1977 Warren calendar; it was also reprinted several years later as the cover to #98. For Enrich, 1976 was an enormously prolific and creative year; not only did it see him painting some of his most memorable *Vampirella* covers, but he also created several more images that were utilized in the calendar, and a further painting that was to first appear as the cover to the last *Vampirella* paperback. This perhaps explains the unexpected return of Sanjulián as the cover artist to issues 50 and 51, and possibly even Ken Kelly's painting for #46.

Altogether, Warren published three calendars for the years 1976, '77 and '78, each of which had a particular focus. The first was devoted to Sanjulián which, behind a simple text cover, featured eleven paintings from previously published magazines, including the covers to *Vampirella* 15 and 36, and an illustration of a centaur that was only used as the cover to the 7th issue of the Spanish version of *1984*. The following year's calendar was titled "Vampirella and Other Girls Drawn by Enrich" and contained eight previously published covers (seven from *Vampirella*, along with the cover to *Eerie* #35), and four that had yet to appear at that point. Two of the images were quickly reused as the covers to issues 58 and 61, but the final two were held back for several years, finally appearing in 1980 as numbers 91 and 92. The last calendar was the most inventive, containing twelve entirely new illustrations by the top of Warren's American and international talent, including a beautiful new Vampi pen-and-ink composition by Pepe Gonzalez.

VAMPIRELLA #54, *September 1976*
Artist Enrich.

Vampirella's crouching figure emerges from the darkness in a painting that was also featured in the 1977 Warren calendar. The calendar illustration is much lighter than the cover and reveals hidden details such as the stone wall and metal ring behind her, suggesting that she is in a castle or prison of some kind. Since the painting was clearly not illustrating a specific story, it is possible that it was one of the pictures created especially for the upcoming calendar. Vampi's figure was later adapted for the cover of a much later Enrich cover, *Vampirella* # 94, which used the same pose in an entirely different composition.

VAMPIRELLA #56, *December 1976.*
Artist Enrich.

A stunning Enrich painting illustrates a stunning Gonzalez "Vampirella" strip: the classic "Headless Horseman of All Hallow's Eve." Amusingly, the artist used *Selecciones Ilustradas* boss Josep Toutain as his model for the cover's mad scientist.

VAMPIRELLA #57, *January 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

Vampi cowers before a stumbling zombie in this scene from "City of Ghosts," one of the best-written strips of the series, and undoubtedly one of Pepe Gonzalez's finest achievements in comics. The cover was modeled by Margit Kocsis, who also posed for issues 21, 27, 33, 34 (the inset panel), 42, 54, and 59, making her—along with Carol de Haro—one of the main inspirations behind the appearance of the character. Koscis was born in Indonesia, of Dutch ancestry, and came to Spain in the early 60's. She pursued a successful career as a model and actress (appearing in 11 movies, including starring roles in several 70's comedies), but her great love was always for art, something she pursued with some success later on in life. Her first connection with S.I. came as a model for the numerous fotonovela books being produced by the agency, put together by Manel Dominguez and future *Vampi* cover artist Lluís Ribas. Enrich began to take photos of her in the early 70's, using her as a model for Vampirella, and also for book covers throughout the decade. She was also the inspiration for Esteban Maroto's Satanna in his reinterpretation of the character in *Vampire Tales*, making her something of an icon for both Warren and Marvel. As Manel Dominguez recalls, she was the principal model for Pepe Gonzalez's conceptualization of Vampirella:

"It was Pepe who used her face the most, but taking it from the photo-novels, for the inner pages in black-and-white. There are lots of [images of] her face there, and also from models like Carol de Haro, Encarnita Pacheco, Conchita Cura, and others."

SADD

VAMPIRELLA #58, *March 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich's cover was taken from the 1977 Warren calendar, which had been released some five months earlier, so the image would have felt extremely familiar to many readers. Less familiar was the line-up of artists in that issue, which included Carmine Infantino, Dick Giordano, and Russ Heath. Under editor Louise Jones, there was a very marked move away from using Spanish artists, and in the coming months an increasing number of home-based talents, such as Val Mayerik and Leo Duranona, would become regular contributors to the comic.

VAMPIRELLA #59, *April 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

A poignant, understated cover by Enrich, reflecting his experience on countless romance books. This was one of the last covers modeled by Margit Kocsis, who was such an important part of the character's appearance. Her friend Manel Navarro Dominguez remembers her life and art:

"It must have been the late 50's when I started to see magazine adverts for a famous Barcelona jeweler with the image of a blonde girl whose beauty was new to the eyes of the Spanish. Blonde, big eyes, porcelain-doll face and sensual lips, she impressed me deeply. Her image began to appear more and more, and I don't remember how but I found out her name was Margit Kocsis. One night in 1960, at the premiere of *Rocco and His Brothers*, I saw her enter the cinema and take her place in the row in front of mine. I vividly remember her appearance, with her hair up, I was only 19 years old, and her beauty took my breath away. Later, she began appearing on television, notably in a brandy commercial where she appeared with her hair flowing behind her, riding a white horse. All of Spain went crazy about her.

"Almost ten years later, in one of the many diversions of my career, I spent time working for S.I. on their fotonovelas when I found out that the producer had 'signed' Margit to model for them. I was told to direct her first job on the series and I fell hopelessly in love. It was not just her beauty, I knew about that, but above all it was the sweetness, kindness, professionalism, patience and savoir-faire of the woman born in Indonesia to Dutch parents, whose family lived in Amsterdam. We became friends, good friends. But neither I, nor anyone except her and her family, knew anything about her illness. She was suffering from severe leukemia, which finally took her in December 1984 at the age of 43. Two weeks before her death we had been dining at my home. She was still young, abruptly leaving behind her a growing and exemplary career as a painter, just at the time when her work was becoming popular. It has been almost 30 years and I still cannot accept her death. I am not alone. Many other people I know very closely are affected to this day. One friend, a painter like her, says she was like an angel on earth and I cannot agree more. I still love you, Margit."

VAMPIRELLA #60, *May 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

The Blood-Red Queen returns and Enrich gets his first chance to paint her, resulting in a cover with a startling amount of exposed flesh on display for a comic book. A two-part story that spread over to the next issue saw the Queen pluck out Vampirella's eyes in retribution for her own, resulting in some startling imagery from artist Pepe Gonzalez. For his cover, Enrich depicts the Queen with dark trickles of blood seeping from her empty eye-sockets as Vampi cowers in horror before her. The Queen herself is stripped of her ornamentation and what few clothes she was originally given, but the artist preserves her modesty with a pair of circular breastplates. The crouching demon behind her is based on a creature from her first appearance in #49, but in this issue her accomplice is small toad-like man by the name of Quilp.

VAMPIRELLA #61, *July 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich's striking cover painting had first appeared some 9 months earlier in the 1977 Warren calendar, though the comic cropped out the snow capped mountains and circling pterodactyls.

VAMPIRELLA #62, *August 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

A rich slice of 50's sci-fi cheese graces this Enrich painting as Vampi and company head off into space in the first part of the return to Drakulon storyline. With a creature—part giant mantis, part squid, and straight out of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*—this was the first cover in several years to return to the ever popular "Vampi and hideous monster" theme.

VAMPIRELLA #63, *September 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

Two issues, one monster, separated by four years and with a whole different approach. *Vampirella* #63 was one of the annual "Collector's Spectacular" issues that reprinted some of the best strips from the comic's recent past, so with no new "Vampi" strip to illustrate, Enrich could pretty much come up with whatever concept he liked. Turning once again to the classic beauty and the beast theme, which he had only just used for the previous issue, the artist audaciously chose to recycle the leering frog creature from his cover to *Vampirella* #29. But where his depiction of Vampirella in the earlier cover was of a small, demurely cowering figure, for the newer illustration he practically filled the cover with her straining, voluptuous body. For his earliest reference photographs, Enrich had posed his models in standard bikinis, adjusting them to Vampirella's more complex outfit in the painting stage. Later on he used nude models, sometimes with the costume actually painted on their bodies; the barely covered figure on this cover would appear to be one of the latter.

VAMPIRELLA #64, *October 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich chose a very different looking model for this scene of a chained Vampirella being menaced by a mostly unseen creature. The image was later picked up by Harris for the first of their many Vampi comics, the hard-to-find 1988 one-shot, #113. Interestingly, a comparison of the two covers shows a significant number of white chips on the monsters hands in the Harris comic, suggesting that it had been re-photographed from the original art and that the painting itself had been poorly stored over the years.

VAMPIRELLA #65, *December 1977.*
Artist Enrich.

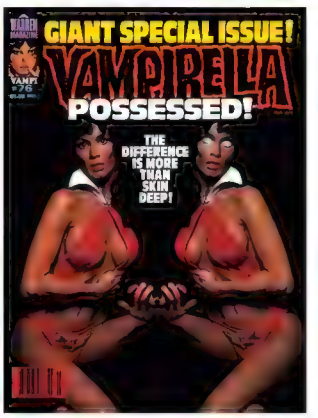
Another beauty and the beast cover, this time illustrating a pivotal strip in Vampirella's history: the first of a two-part story where she finally returns to her home planet. Enrich's grotesque space-zombie was sadly nothing like the "Mad King of Drakulon" of the story's title who, disappointingly, turned out to be a regular-looking man. The issue was also significant for featuring the mystery strip contest, which invited readers to guess the ending of each of the comic's five strips, the last pages of which were then printed in the next issue. Among the artists contributing to the contest was Rafael Auraleon, who was second only to Pepe Gonzalez in the number of strips he drew for the comic, but remains a figure of great mystery. Despite Auraleon's propensity for scenes of real horror, S.I.'s Marcel Miralles remembers him as "a shy man, dressed with jeans and a jean jacket. Entering my office and delivering his work, a bit afraid of receiving a bad opinion about it."

VAMPIRELLA #66, *January 1978.*
Artist Enrich.

The culmination of the storyline started in issue #65, sees Vampirella returning home to find the planet Drakulon returned to the lushly vegetated, living planet of her childhood, though seemingly deserted. In one of Bill DuBay's most sensitively written stories, we see scenes from both the gradual destruction of the planet, and its rebirth via the strange, mutated figures of a new race of beings set to claim the world as their own. Vampirella also finally tracks down Pantha, exiled to Drakulon back in issue 50, and discovers that the changeling had completely abandoned her human side during her time on the planet. For his powerful cover, Enrich focused on the moment the crazed Pantha attacked Vampirella, showing the cat-girl in mid-transformation from her human form to her more primal alter ego. This was the last Vampi cover modeled by Margit Kocsis, and Enrich used photographs of her as the reference for both figures.

After this issue's storyline, both Vampi and Pantha returned to earth and, in a somewhat jarring plot twist, decided to become movie stars in Hollywood.

VAMPIRELLA #67, *March 1978*



By the mid-70's, a deal with Hammer films had been agreed upon, a Vampirella script was in its second draft and Barbara Leigh was picked to play Vampirella with Peter Cushing as Pendagron. The film was launched at the 1978 Famous Monsters convention with Leigh announced as Vampi, followed soon after by a photo shoot with Hank Londoner on the streets of New York and back in his studio, but by the time his photos began to appear on the covers of the magazine, the movie was already dead in the water.

Jose Villarrubia: "After sixty-six painted covers, Jim Warren decided to try a different approach for *Vampirella* #67. Next to the bold headline 'Vampi Goes to Hollywood,' it featured a photograph of an actual live model dressed as the title character. Comic book photo covers had been used before but the results had been awkward and kitsch. This one was different. It was shot in tasteful chiaroscuro reminiscent of the oil paintings of Sanjulián and Enrich. It was convincing. The magazine went on to feature seven more photographic covers. The photographer, Hank Londoner, was never credited and unfortunately has now been largely forgotten, but the model has not. Barbara Leigh was an actor and model who, for a time, was cast in a never-realized Hammer film about Vampirella. She combined beautifully classic looks with a natural elegance that lent the character a grace and dignity that later models, often enhanced by surgery, have failed to achieve. Each of the covers where she appeared was more successful than its predecessor. In the last two, graphic design elements dominated the compositions, giving them a look that had more in common with newsstand magazines than with comic books or fantasy paperbacks. The cover for issue seventy-eight has Vampirella peeping over the logo, breaking the invisible barrier between the cover illustration and its trade dress. The title of the story is incorporated as a discreet tattoo on her waist. The result is extraordinary. Probably inspired by images like the cover of *Playboy* of July 1974, where the logo becomes part of the pin-up, this cover has the allure of the classic erotic magazine, and it teases setting expectations not quite matched inside the publication. Coincidentally, after Leigh retired from acting, she became Photo Project Coordinator for *Playboy*."

WARREN MAGAZINE

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VAMPI GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

see page 5

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VAMPIRELLA #68. *April 1978.*
Artist Enrich. Original art 11"x15".
Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

It was two and a half years before Enrich would paint Vampirella again, and for his temporary farewell to the title the artist chose to pay homage to the golden age of the science fiction pulps with this classic 50's style cover. In fact, the picture is effectively a repainting of Earl Bergey's cover to the January 1950 issue of *Startling Stories*, with Vampirella taking the place of the pulp's captive space siren. Bergey was a pulp veteran and is remembered, as Vincent DiFate put it in his book *Infinite Worlds*, as "The principal proponent of the brass brassiere" school of science fiction art, and made a suitably ironic contrast with Enrich's more contemporary vision of glamour.

VAMPIRELLA #70, *July 1978.*
Artist Ken Kelly.

This was Ken Kelly's only Warren cover in 1978, and coming as it did at the height of his success with record and book covers, there is a suspicion that it had in fact been painted some years earlier, before higher paying work took him away from comics. Clearly, the swamp woman on the cover was not Vampirella, and it is likely that the painting had originally been intended for either *Creepy* or *Eerie*. Nonetheless, the illustration of a green-lit figure, rising out of the smoke-shrouded bayou with a colossal snake writhing around her was one of Kelly's most powerful images. The painting inspired this issue's most disturbing story, "Swamp Lovers," written by Bill DuBay and drawn by Leo Duranona, though the beautiful girl on the cover turned out to be a grotesque shape-changing monster in the strip.

VAMPIRELLA #72, *September 1978.*
Artist Enrich.

Enrich's grand farewell to Vampirella had come some months earlier with the sci-fi pin up in issue #68. This issue's painting, nestling among the many Barbara Leigh photo covers, felt like a journey into the past. The style of Enrich's painting, the cover girl who looked suspiciously like Vampirella but wasn't, even the white bikini (last seen on the cover to issue #35 and possibly deriving from the same photo shoot) seemed to date from some years earlier. It is entirely possible that the painting itself did indeed come from that earlier period, as did several of the issue's strips. The truth is that many of Warren's regulars were working elsewhere at this time, and in Enrich's case that meant book covers for a dizzying array of publishers and countries.

VAMPIRELLA #73, *October 1978.*
Artist Bob Larkin.

The Barbara Leigh cover that doesn't have Barbara Leigh on it. Right in the middle of the seven photo covers, Warren commissioned Bob Larkin to paint this dynamic transformation scene of Vampi changing from a bat into her human form. Clearly based on one of the unused pictures from Leigh's photo session, the thinking behind the painting was presumably to show something that could not convincingly be portrayed photographically, but would still act as a piece of promotion for the movie. A great realist with a knack for likenesses, Larkin was a natural for Leigh's metamorphosis into a comic book character, though conversely it is for his knack of making comic characters look like real people that he is mostly remembered today.

VAMPIRELLA #75, *January 1979.*
Artists Pepe Gonzalez and Kim McQuaite.

The first of Gonzalez's three *Vampirella* covers, this picture was a collaboration with art director Kim McQuaite, which the artist almost certainly knew little about. Taking a previously unpublished Gonzalez drawing, McQuaite added some basic color washes to the figure, a swirly background and slightly comical creature to create a wholly new image (very) loosely based on this issue's "Vampi" strip. Seeing the extraordinary job the artist did on the cover for issue #82 (and the iconic cover to issue #19, which Jim Warren thought he had painted), it is surprising he was not commissioned to create more.

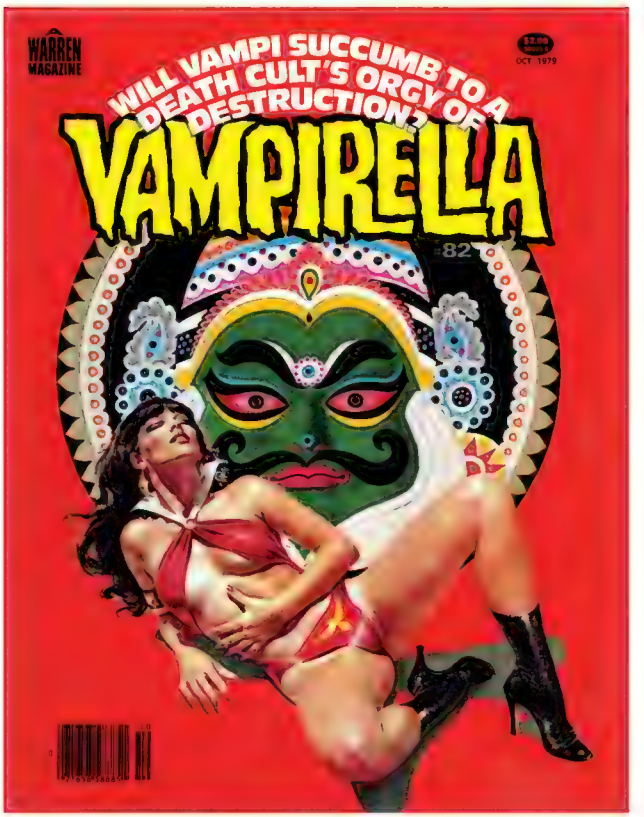
VAMPIRELLA #79, *July 1979.*
Artist Jordi Penalva.

Jordi Penalva was the last of the great Spanish artists to join Warren and, between 1978 and 1982, he painted fourteen wonderful covers for the company. Penalva was an incredibly versatile painter, adept at a wide variety of genres, but was perhaps widely perceived as essentially an artist of gritty, muscular action scenes. Unsurprisingly, most of his Warren covers featured time-traveling cowboy the Rook, both in *Eerie* and later on in his own title. Penalva's first cover, *Eerie* #95, did indeed star the Rook, but also featured Vampirella in a scene from that issue's two-part crossover strip "Warriors From The Stars." A year later, the artist got another chance to paint the Drakulonian in what was to be his only Vampirella cover, based on the lengthy *Dragon Queen* serial.

VAMPIRELLA #80, *August 1979.*
Artist Esteban Maroto.

This was Maroto's sole *Vampirella* cover and only his second for Warren following a fantasy-themed painting for *Creepy* #105 earlier this same year. It was also the first example of a practice that would become more prevalent over the next few years—the use of existing images that had originally appeared abroad. The concept of first publication rights, that is to say the single use of an image for a reduced fee but without buying its copyright, is a widely accepted practice in the publishing world and was one that SI had a lot of experience with. Throughout the 70's, Warren artists such as Fernando Fernandez, Luis Garcia and Pepe Gonzalez created images for romance books that were then sold around the world by S.I. The agency also sold Warren cover art to comic and book publishers internationally, often combining them in packages with art from creators it represented such as Richard Corben, Vicente Segrelles, and Boris Vallejo, along with, ironically, images from Skywald and Atlas.

VAMPIRELLA #82, *October 1979.*
Artist Pepe Gonzalez.

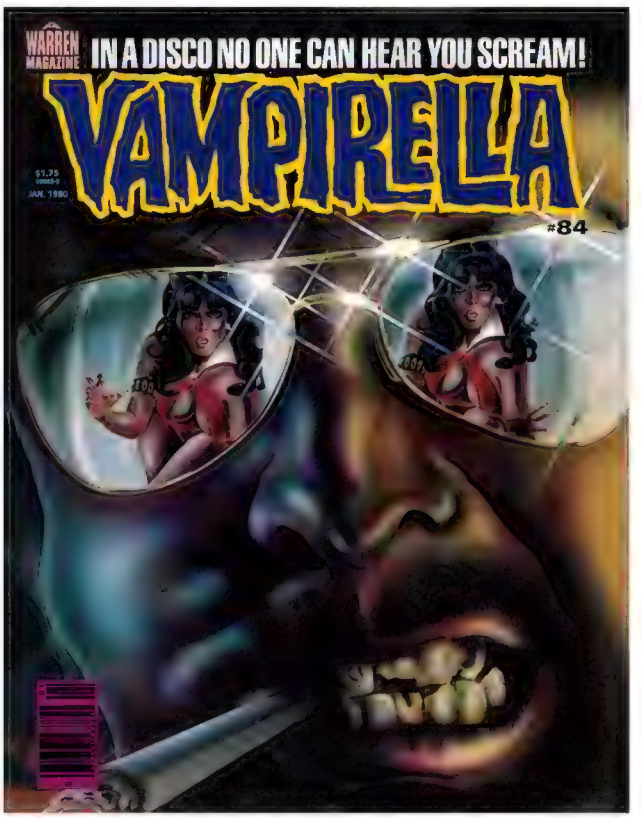


Pepe Gonzalez's only commissioned cover for *Vampirella* has rightly become one of the most memorable images of the character, a testament to the artist's bravura technique and innate sense of design. What is perhaps most striking is the sheer, unashamed sexuality of the picture with Vampi lying legs apart, her head thrown back, apparently lost in erotic reverie. Then, as now, this would have been seen as an extremely provocative cover to use on a magazine that was, theoretically, freely available to anyone with the $2.00 asking price. By contrast, this issue's "Vampirella" story was a rushed, disappointing effort, possibly the least inspired of his career, and was to be Gonzalez's last strip for two and a half years.

VAMPIRELLA #83, *December 1979.*
Artists Pepe Gonzalez with Kim McQuaite.

If the previous issue was Gonzalez's swan song, this cover was perhaps a bittersweet reminder of what we were missing. The last of his memorable frontis illustrations had appeared in 1976, but there were clearly still several drawings from that period that remained unpublished. One was used in issue #85 (and again, reversed, in #91), while another dating from 1977 was printed two issues later. This issue's cover was actually drawn in 1976 and was originally part of a larger scene with Vampi's figure set against a moon, within a pencil-drawn frame. For the new cover, art director Kim McQuaite cut out the background elements, reversed the figure, put in an airbrushed snake creature and added a garish background of yellow, orange and pink circles. The snake bore no resemblance to anything in the issue, which was, in effect, the annual all-reprint 1980 Yearbook.

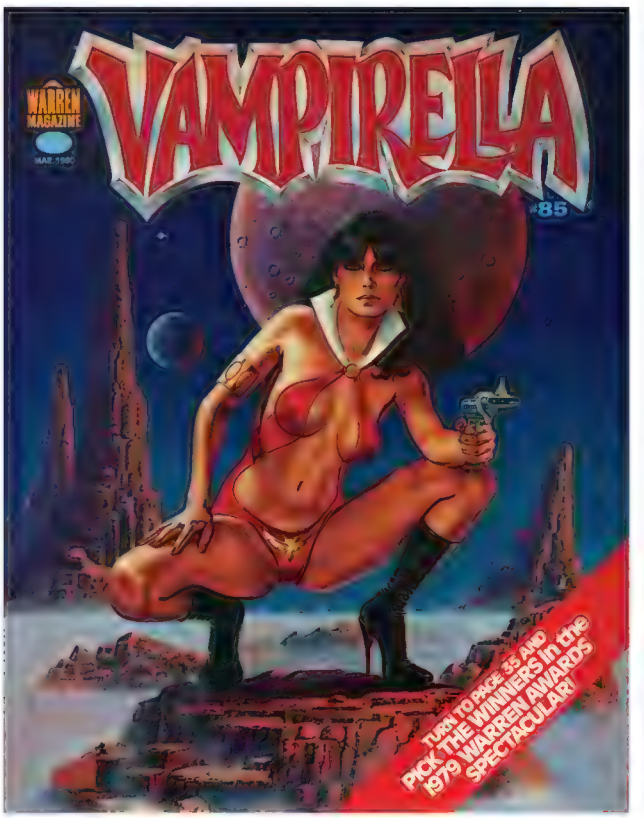
VAMPIRELLA #84, *January 1980.*
Artist Steve Harris



This is possibly the most controversial issue in the history of the comic, and definitely a cover that still divides opinion to this day. The late 70's and early 80's were very much the era of the airbrush with artists such as Phillip Castle, H.R. Giger and Hajime Sorayama becoming immensely popular. This cover, the only known comic work by artist Steve Harris, was clearly an attempt to update the look of the magazine by bringing in an airbrush artist. Both the highly polished sheen of the artwork, and the unusual composition were utterly unlike anything seen on a Warren cover before. Instead of the sex appeal of an Enrich, or the otherworldly fantasy of a Sanjulián or Frazetta, this was slick, in-your-face, and utterly contemporary.

As the headline "In a disco no one can hear you scream!" loudly proclaimed, this issue confronted the changing tastes in popular culture head-on. In the lead strip, "Phantasmagoria Of Terror", Vampi and Pantha do indeed head off to a roller disco where they are confronted by another staple of 70's exploitation: a gang of Hells Angels. It is a tale that leaves few stereotypes untapped, but is at least partially saved by the artwork of Jim Janes and inker Rudy Nebres. Following the lead of Alex Nino a few years earlier, Nebres was one of many Filipino artists who brought a new sense of dynamism and exquisitely detailed rendering to the company. Evidently, his artistry was well received, as he soon became the regular artist for "Vampirella."

VAMPIRELLA #85, *March 1980.*
Artist Paul Gulacy.



When Paul Gulacy came to Warren in 1979 he was already a great favorite with fans through his innovative artwork on the Marvel comic *Master of Kung Fu*, so his arrival was something of a coup. Over the course of his two years with the company, he painted covers for *Vampirella* and *The Rook*, and drew two sumptuously rendered strips for *Eerie*.

Paul Gulacy: "My time at Marvel was basically flying by the seat of my pants until it was time to spread my wings. I was dying to pick up the brush and start painting. I was having interviews with paperback publishing houses at that time and out of the blue, I was contacted by Bill DuBay over at Warren. It actually started with a twenty-page *The Rook* story that was done all in pencil, and to be shot that way. I think it was an inventory story and it was never published. I don' t even have any idea what happened to it. When Warren shut down, I never heard a word on where that art ended up. Shortly after that, Bill had another assignment—a fully painted *Rook* cover with the Rook in the midst of the battle at the Alamo. This time, someone at Warren decided to eliminate the entire background scene that I painted. Then in a year or so, I got the *Vampi* cover assignment. I think that came through Louise Simonson, who was Louise Jones at that time, giving me the call out of the blue. That was pretty exciting, not to mention challenging. Now, bear in mind, I'm drawing comics, hustling at paperback joints and working for ad agencies in New York, but I was willing to hit the brakes for this job. I was a fan of the series. I met Jim Warren, but never dealt with him on jobs directly.

"The painting was based on a girl who used to be my model. Vampirella is supposed to be from another world, so I thought it would be a nice change of pace from what we were used to seeing to put her on the moon and go with a kind of goth/sci-fi theme. Everyone dug it. No corrections, no changes, thank goodness. My style was going through some changes and I was applying a more illustrative approach to my work. Both of the strips were done entirely in brush and black watercolor paint, no pen work at all. I share the rights to both stories with their writers, Doug Moench and Don McGregor. I was also doing a slow fade from comics and working almost full time in advertising. But once you have the love of graphic storytelling in your blood, it's almost impossible to fade away. It's not so much as a thing you love to do—it's a thing you need to do. That long arm always pulls you back in."

VAMPIRELLA #86, *April 1980.*
Artist Terrance Lindall.

Two issues after the most controversial Vampirella cover came the strangest: a surrealistic nightmare channeling the spirits of Hieronymus Bosch and far-off Hindu Mystics. Terrance Lindall was essentially a fine artist and philosopher who found himself at Warren almost by accident. After leaving the army and being drawn to New York by the allure of a beautiful girl, Lindall decided to become a painter. Having printed up copies of his painting "The Stone Eater," he set about trying to sell it by mail order which is how he ended up at offices of Warren Publishing in 1979. The company wasn't accepting outside advertisers, but Jim Warren was so taken by the poster that he commissioned Lindall to paint a new composition for him. When the artist returned two weeks later, Warren and art director Kim McQuaite were astonished to see that the painstakingly detailed artwork was smaller than the actual comic, in contrast to the often giant canvases of their other artists. This saw print as the cover to *Creepy* #108.

Altogether, Lindall painted five covers for Warren over the course of two years, all of which depicted twisted, disturbing creatures in hellishly surreal landscapes, built up laboriously by thousands of tiny brush strokes. His *Vampirella* cover is by far the most accessible of these paintings, featuring an atypically calm central figure, seemingly beckoning the reader to come inside (but beware of the demon lurking behind her).

VAMPIRELLA #88, *July 1980.*
Artist Enrich.

Vampirella stares languidly out ahead, as lightning flashes above a mist-shrouded graveyard and a squadron of bats swoop down behind her. It was not so much symbolic, more a statement of intent; a declaration that the *Vampirella* readers might have grown to love in the early 70's was still here and that perhaps the days of alien amazons, Oriental dragons, and Hollywood B-movies was behind us. It was the first issue to feature full art strips by new regular artist Rudy Nebres, who announced his arrival in spectacular form. It was also the first issue of new material to be edited by the returning Bill DuBay. Even more significantly, it was Enrich's first new painting of Vampirella in over two years.

VAMPIRELLA #89, *August 1980.*
Artist Enrich.

The second of Enrich's 80's covers was, in fact, a reprint of the cover image from the last Warner Books *Vampirella* paperback, which had first seen print some four years earlier. Interestingly, Enrich's striking image of Vampirella kneeling in front of a fire (in this case, apparently summoning up a demon of some sort) was echoed in a later watercolor painting by his friend, Pepe Gonzalez.

VAMPIRELLA #90, *September 1980.*
Artist Enrich.

Possibly the best of Enrich's later *Vampi* covers, this painting is a stunning exercise in radiant shades of orange, red, and pink, and positively glows. The composition carries strong echoes of two earlier, equally iconic covers: the seductively draped figure with an upturned face looking straight at the viewer was first used on the cover to #53. Similarly, the circular patterned motif on the floor and Vampi's intensely smoldering eyes are reminiscent of the memorable cover to #52, which had only just been reprinted three issues earlier. Unsurprisingly, the image was picked up by Toutain Editor, for the second of their *Vampirella* covers when the series began appearing in the Spanish version of *Creepy*.

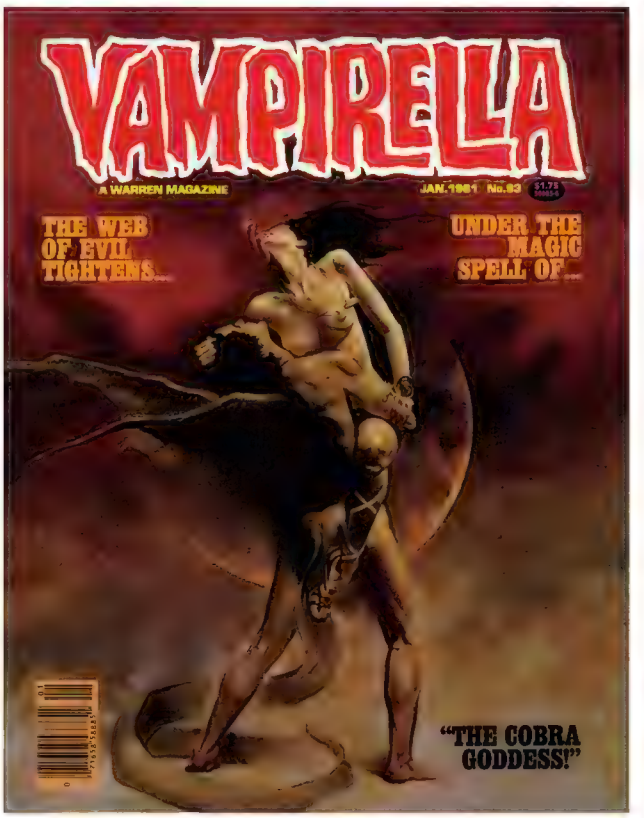
VAMPIRELLA #91, *October 1980.*
Artist Enrich.

Another example of Warren reaching back to the 70's for an authentic Vampirella image; this Enrich painting first appeared in the 1977 Warren calendar and the only surprise was that the publisher waited so long before utilizing it as a cover. The delay might have been out of a sense of solidarity with those fans that bought the calendar on the promise of unseen Vampi artwork, and partly because of the asymmetrical and somewhat undynamic composition. Vampirella is depicted reclining on a draped seat with a large, dark church window behind her. The picture has a balance and a quiet sense of foreboding to it, which is highly effective. However, what works as a stand-alone illustration might not necessarily have the impact needed to sell a comic, and here the art department compensated by adding four panels (excerpting imagery from earlier Enrich and Sanjulián paintings) to add weight to the right hand side of the picture. The original sense of unease might now have been lost beneath the visual clutter, but as a cover it was perhaps a more eye-catching, colorful image.

VAMPIRELLA #92, *December 1980.*
Artist Enrich

Enrich returned to *Vampirella* in 1980, but his new creations were invariably interspersed with recycled images from the past. Some four years after it was created, this was the last of Enrich's 1976 paintings to see print as a magazine cover, after first appearing in the 1977 Warren calendar. The illustration features a strange creature, part bear, part bat perhaps, leering out of the gloom in one of those shadowy dungeons in which Vampi so often seems to find herself. Inside the comic, Vampirella gained another new member of her cast, Cryssie Collins, a sweet young girl from New York with an unfortunate affliction: she was possessed by a demon.

VAMPIRELLA #93, *January 1981.*
Artist Enrich



A startling cover for two reasons: first, through careful use of shadows and an intense, though almost monotone, palette of deep reds and browns, Enrich managed to sneak out on to the newsstands two naked figures locked in passionate combat. Second, it symbolized a change in the relationship between Warren and its principal artistic agency S.I., as the image had first appeared in Spain (as the cover to Spanish *1984* #19) several months before its use here. Up until 1978, S.I. had been content to sell artwork to Warren, and in turn, to license Warren artwork to the rest of the world. With the launch in late 1978 of their version of *1984,* S.I. had become a magazine publisher itself (trading under the company name Toutain Editor) and it would now mix reprints of Warren material with strips and covers of its own. Several other paintings appeared in Toutains 1984 before their use by Warren, including the Jordi Penalva covers later used on *Eerie* #118 and *1984* #18. Perhaps the most significant example of the change in creative power would come later the following year when *Vampirella* started reprinting one of Toutain's most celebrated original properties, "Torpedo," which was the stand out strip in Spanish *Creepy*.

However, Warren was still capable of creating new and well-crafted series as evidenced by the debut in this issue of Rich Margopoulos' "Cassandra St. Knight" with art by the redoubtable Auraleon. The strip ran for 9 episodes between issues 93 and 103 and was an engaging, if occasionally wayward, mix of mysticism and cold war espionage. St. Knight was a psychic, able to travel along the astral plane, who combined TV tricks with full blown cosmic inter-dimensional magic in the tradition of Dr. Strange or Madame Xanadu. The involvement of the C.I.A. in the strip added a decidedly retro tone of red-baiting to the series, but never detracted too much from the true appeal of the series: Auraleon's inspired, torrid visions of other dimensions and bizarre, other-worldly creatures.

VAMPIRELLA #94, *March 1981.*
Artist Enrich. Original art oil on canvas paper 19x 13 ½,
from the collection of Ingrid Neilson

Covers can spring from several different sources of inspiration: some will be based on a particular scene from a story or even a particular panel, others might just symbolically represent the tone or characteristics of the strip, possibly emerging entirely from the imagination of the artist. Some exist simply because someone thought an idea was "cool." But then there are other illustrations that can take years in gestation and bring together elements from other pictures, other sources and even other decades. Some collectors have long believed that this cover to Vampirella #94 was in some way a montage of other pictures rather than a painting in its own right, but not so: it is clearly an entirely new illustration. Part of this confusion stems from the familiarity of Vampi's pose and the fact that much of the cover is obscured by vignettes of earlier Sanjulián and Frazetta paintings (taken from *Creepy* #42 and *Vampirella* #31 respectively) and drenched in acres of text.

The genesis of the painting goes back as far as *Vampirella* #38, where Pepe Gonzalez based a section of his splash page to "The Mummy's Revenge" on an ancient Egyptian statue, presumably a sphinx. That same statue dominates the background to this painting, which is just another of many examples of the two friends sharing reference photos. Vampirella is striking a pose that first appeared as the cover to #54 in 1976, though for this newer version Enrich has subtly softened her features and streamlined her physique slightly, making the pose somewhat more relaxed and elegant.

VAMPIRELLA #95, *April 1981.*
Artist Ken Kelly.

Ken Kelly's last Vampirella cover is more of a symbolic composition than a scene from a particular story, particularly with its tentacled creature that bears little resemblance to anything from the strip. Certainly, it has no relation to anything in this issue, which deals with an army of Vampirella clones in what was, sadly, Rudy Nebres' final issue. By this point, the comic itself had settled into a more or less settled line up of "Vampirella," "Cassandra St. Knight," and "Pantha," all written by Rich Maropoulos, and "The Fox," which started in this issue. Following her initial six-part series and subsequent exile in space (issue #50), Pantha had been absent from the comic until a return in #66, after which she became a regular member of Vampirella's cast, finally getting her own series again with #90.

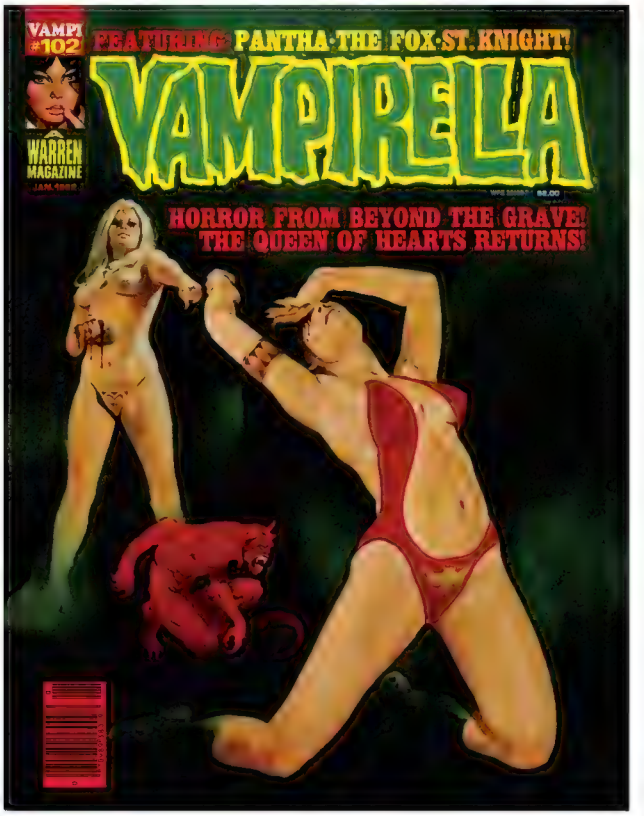
VAMPIRELLA #96, *May 1981.*
Artist Jordi Longaron.

Jordi Longaron's sole *Vampirella* painting first appeared as the cover to the Australian *Vampirella* comic in 1976, where it was clearly illustrating a scene from the Leopold Sanchez-drawn "Head Hunter of London" strip. That story originally appeared in issue 39, which was published with a non-Vampi Ken Kelly cover, so the assumption must be that somebody at Warren seemingly deemed it more commercial than Longaron's beautiful painting. To add insult to injury, when the cover was finally printed some five years later, it was credited to Enrich rather than Longaron.

VAMPIRELLA #101, *December 1981.*
Artist Noly Panaligan. Original art 16.5"x22.5".
Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

Vampirella #100, was not an altogether satisfying issue. Unlike the centenary editions of *Creepy* and *Eerie*, which were packed with new strips from top creators, this was a predominantly a reprint collection topped off with a cover collage of images from earlier issues. Its saving grace was the unexpected return of Archie Goodwin to write the one new "Vampi" strip, paired with wonderfully attractive artwork from Anton Caravana.

VAMPIRELLA #102, *January 1982.*
Artist Enrich.



The final appearance of the Blood-Red Queen inspires yet another powerful cover from Enrich, though the painting was mistakenly credited to Sanjulián. The cover was, in many ways, a mirror image of issue 60, complete with a crouching red demon and blood pouring from Vampi's eyes, both visual elements from that issue's storyline rather than this. For her final tale of the Warren era, this Queen was, in fact, the sister of the original Blood-Red Queen, bent on revenge for her sister's death, although she meets a similarly unpleasant demise. It is striking how cavalier Warren was with so many of its iconic characters—of which the Queen was definitely one—many of whom were killed off after barely a handful of strips.

Another aspect in which the company differed from its more mainstream rivals was its unwillingness to create any sort of cohesive "Warren Universe," preferring for the most part to launch a succession of new series rather than rehash the past. There were a few exceptions to this, however, like the two-part Vampirella crossover with the Rook in *Eerie* issues #94 and #95, and the book-length "Vampirella and the Time Force" strip that was published in early 1982 in *Eerie* #130.

VAMPIRELLA #103, *March 1982.*
Artist Enrich.

This striking image of Vampirella swimming underwater was one of Enrich's best paintings during his second period on the title and perfectly reflected the atmosphere of doomed romanticism in this issue's episode, "The Last Prince." Pepe Gonzalez had last drawn "Vampirella" in 1979, and his reappearance as the artist on this new Vampi story was a welcome surprise for longtime fans. The occasional Gonzalez frontis drawing had appeared soon after his final strip, but only began in earnest with issue 101. In the comic's final year, the artist would create twelve drawings and seven strips (only six of which were actually printed by Warren) in this unexpected, and bittersweet, coda to his Vampirella career.

VAMPIRELLA #104, *April 1982.*
Artist Enrich. Original art 15"x20".
Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

One of the most interesting aspects of *Vampirella* magazine in the 80's was the diverse selection of series that came to dominate the title. "Jeremy" was perhaps the strangest choice for a female-themed horror comic, as it featured the adventures of an 18th century cabin boy cast adrift in the Caribbean. The strip was one of a number of prestigious European properties translated by Warren and was possibly an indication of the direction the company might have taken if it had not gone bankrupt. Jeremy, or Jeremie as it was spelled in France, was written and drawn by Paul Gillon whose legendary "Les Naufrage du Temps" was also being serialized in *Eerie* (as "Spacewrecked") in this period.

Jeremie first appeared in the comic *Pif Gadget* in 1968, but was later expanded into a regular series that ran from 1971 to 1973, collected into four newly colored albums by Les Humanoids in the early 80's. The *Vampirella* series featured material from the first volume (which appeared in *Pif Gadget* issues 1378 and 1387) in the original black and white. Newly added tones sadly obscured the artwork to some extent, but the beauty of Gillon's exceptional figure work and stunning landscapes shone through nonetheless, and the strip was one of the highlights of *Vampirella's* twilight years.

VAMPIRELLA #105, *May 1982.*
Artist Enrich. Original art oil on canvas 19"x25.25".
Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

This was to be the first of three reprint issues within an eight month timeframe, a sure sign that all was not well at Warren. Eagle-eyed readers would have recognized the cover from a tiny reproduction in the coming attractions section of issue #100, and in fact the cover shown was clearly numbered 101. Indeed, Enrich's painting depicts a scene from that issue's "Attack of the Star Beast" story, complete with hooded Satanists, semi-clothed sacrificial co-ed and a menacing blob monster. Faced with the choice between Noly Panaligan's unsolicited take on #100's similarly tentacled behemoth and the commissioned Enrich painting, the editors chose the former despite its appearance one issue too late. The thinking might have been that one tentacled blob looked much like another and throughout the comic's history such creatures had been a recurring feature.

The first such behemoth was issue #13's towering, multi-armed Demogorgon that, typical of Pepe Gonzalez, somewhat resembled a hairy frog. A pair of Macdemons followed in issues 28 and 29, looking suitably hirsute and gelatinous, with issue #29's frog-like cover monster reappearing again almost identically on issue #63. In the previous issue, Gonzalez had drawn the alien creature Crouchback in typical, tentacled manner, though strangely Enrich depicted it as a tentacled insect on the cover. A few issues later, #68 starred yet another tentacle monstrosity, though in Orphee's case he was a more pitiful, man-made creation. Unexpectedly, #75's Blob Beast of Blighters Bog proved to be disappointingly human shaped, though she did turn out to be an extraterrestrial cannibal. Finally, this issue's cover star spawned one last monster, as yet another star beast fell to earth in issue 108, which was graced with yet another tentacled frog on what was to be Enrich's penultimate cover for the comic. Issues 106 and 108 featured a monster in its own feature with Don McGregor's surprisingly poignant take on the Loch Ness Monster: "Sweetwater Nessie." Auraleon's beautiful, graphite toned artwork was some of the best of his career and it is a shame that only 25 of McGregor's 70 page story was ever published.

VAMPIRELLA #106, *July 1982.*
Artist Enrich.

Luis Bermejo's splash page for this issue's installment of "The Fox" is typical of his work on the feature in its convincing evocation of ancient China and the strong sense of design. In the eight years he spent at the company after debuting in *Vampirella* #39, he appeared in seventy-eight Warren comics and was very much used as one of its workhorses. The Fox was the last of his significant Warren features and showed the artist at his best, seemingly giving him the time to express himself after years of drawing "The Rook." Nicola Cuti's story was inspired by the Chinese legend of Huli Jing; a shape-changing fox spirit who could take on the appearance of a beautiful girl, in this case princess Ming Toi. While it contained its fair share of naked flesh and copious beheadings, it was nonetheless a pleasingly eccentric series for a horror comic. Equally strange was its extended gestation which saw the first episode, drawn by Jose Ortiz, appear in *Creepy* #100 with the rest of the series continuing almost three years later, starting in *Vampirella* #95, running to nine installments altogether.

VAMPIRELLA #107, *August 1982.*
Artist Sanjulián.

An all-reprint collection of Esteban Maroto strips is graced with the first Sanjulián cover on the comic in six years. To be completely accurate, the painting does not actually feature Vampirella, has no relation to this issue's contents at all and was, in fact, painted several years earlier, in 1978, as the cover to the Ace paperback *Zarsthor's Bane*. From the very start of S.I.'s American adventure comic work was mixed with book covers, and indeed the very first U.S commission was from Dell Books, not Warren. Sanjulián was an extremely prolific artist for Warren in the early 70's but by 1976, the more lucrative paperback market meant that he no longer had time for comics and his final Warren cover was published on *Eerie* #76. However, in the 80's, Warren began utilizing several Sanjulián illustrations that had previously appeared as book covers, nine altogether, primarily in *Eerie* but also in two issues of *Vampirella*: issues 107 and 109.

Sanjulián had not entirely abandoned comics, however, and created a number of fine illustrations for various Spanish titles. His cover for the Spanish *1984* #11 was also utilized for Warren's *Eerie* #102. Out of the blue, the American *1984* published two entirely new Sanjulián covers in 1980: issues 12 and 14, the latter of which was a spectacular Ghita wraparound painting. In Spain, the artist provided covers throughout the 80's for such titles as *Creepy*, *1984*, *Delta*, *Comix International* and, particularly, *Cimoc*. Back in the U.S., he was an occasional contributor to *Heavy Metal,* which alongside his numerous book covers, made him one of the most visible Warren artists long after the company's demise.

VAMPIRELLA #108, *September 1982.*
Artist Enrich. Original art 13.75"x18.5". Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

"Torpedo 1936," which started in this issue, was the last new series to appear in *Vampirella* and typifies the high quality of its final years. As a sign that the balance of power and creativity was shifting away from Warren, "Torpedo" first appeared in issue #32 of Toutain's Spanish edition of *Creepy*, some seven months before its American debut. The strip was summed up in the opening lines from *Vampirella* #112: "My name's Luca... Luca the Torpedo! I'm a hit man... A hired gun... a killer for the mob." The first two episodes of the strip were drawn by comics legend Alex Toth, a fact significant enough to get his name on the cover. However, Toth found Enrique Sanchez Abuli's uncompromisingly brutal scripts to be too harsh for his tastes and he was replaced by Jordi Bernet for the rest of its existence. While *Vampirella* was in terminal decline, "Torpedo" would go on to enormous popularity, with collections appearing in print around the world to this day. In Spain, the strip appeared in numerous issues of *Creepy* before moving on to such titles as *Totem*, *Comix International*, *Thriller*, *Selen* and even *Playboy*.

VAMPIRELLA #109, *October 1982.*
Artist Sanjulián.

In December 1982, an unexpected strip appeared in issue 42 of the Spanish edition of *Creepy*: a "Vampirella" strip called "The Wrathmore Curse" (or "La Maldicion Wrathmore" in Spanish) written and drawn by the regular team of Rich Margopoulos and Pepe Gonzalez. However, the strip had never appeared in the American *Vampirella* title itself and to this day remains unpublished anywhere outside of Spain. The Spanish *Creepy* had been reprinting Gonzalez's 80's "Vampi" strips for some time and episodes from issues 108 and 110 were published before and after the "Wrathmore Curse," suggesting that the story should have appeared in this issue; *Vampirella* #109. However, the issue that was actually published was yet another reprint collection, in this case devoted to the work of Felix Mas. The missing "Vampi" strip could easily have been shifted to #110, or any subsequent issue, but was seemingly forgotten by the company.

Like most of his later Warren covers, Sanjulián's painting was a reprint from an earlier publication, in this case Spanish *Creepy* #31.

VAMPIRELLA #110, *December 1982.*
Artist Enrich. Original art Oil on Canvas 14"x 18.25".
Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions

In all probability, this was the final *Vampirella* cover painted by Enrich for Warren, though he almost certainly had no idea that he would carry on painting her in numerous private commissions for decades to come. The cover is loosely based on a scene from the strip where Vampi is attacked by a demon named Balazarr, but whereas Gonzalez's monster is a small werewolf-type creature dressed in rags, Enrich has summoned up a winged colossus, who looks suspiciously like the devil himself. He also bore a striking similarity to fellow S.I. artist Victor Ramos, who had earlier appeared as a demonic creature on Enrich's earlier cover to *Psycho* #8 and as a zombie for Fernando Fernandez's painting for *Scream* #5.

VAMPIRELLA #111, *January 1983.*
Artist Albert Pujolar

One of the pitfalls of using stock images from an art agency is not always knowing where it might have appeared before. In this instance, Pujolar's wonderful illustration had appeared eight years earlier as the cover of Atlas/Seaboards *Devilina* #1. As Devilina was so clearly one of many Vampirella clones, this might well have been profoundly embarrassing had anyone at the company realized this (though not as awkward as the following month's *Creepy*, which used a Miralles cover that had previously appeared on *Nightmare* #9 from arch rival Skywald). Just a few years earlier it had appeared in Germany on the cover of Pabel's *Terra Fantasy* #15, one of many S.I./Warren images used by this series.

The cover shows a strange, nightmarish scene from a story that had probably never actually existed, which would have been typical of Pujolar's career.

VAMPIRELLA #112, *March 1983.*
Artist Martin Hoffman

The end of an era. After 112 regular issues, one annual, a color special, posters, books, foreign editions and so very nearly a movie, *Vampirella* finally came to an end. This last issue was a fitting way to bow out, with two well-drawn "Vampi" strips, Jordi Bernet's first "Torpedo" story and art by Maroto, Bermejo, and Auraleon. Issue 113 is optimistically trailed as being on sale the following month, which suggests that the decision to close the company down was an abrupt one, but when the issue finally did appear five years later it was as an all-reprint collection from Harris publications, not Warren.

PANTHA (WARREN SPECIAL#8), *October 1980.*
Artist Bob Larkin

Warren was heavily committed to recycling, years before it became fashionable, with all-reprint issues appearing as early as the first *Famous Monsters Yearbook* in 1962. The company usually kept the frequency of its reprint issues of their regular comic magazines to once or twice a year, but in times of hardships, these could appear with depressing regularity. In 1977, they launched the first of an irregularly published series called *Warren Presents*, which collected together choice reprints around a particular theme, usually in a transparent attempt to cash in on a popular film of the time. The eighth issue of the series was devoted to Vampirella's most popular co-star Pantha, reprinting the first five episodes of the series (issues 30-33 and 42) by Steve Skeates, Rafael Auraleon, and Budd Lewis.

Across the initial six-issue run (the final installment in *Vampirella* #44 was omitted from this issue), Auraleon's art changed from the wash tones and scratching of its earliest episodes to the intense detail of the last two. Both approaches were sublime examples of a master stylist, one of comics most original creators. Most issues of *Warren Presents* featured new covers by such artists as Jim Laurier, Paul Gulacy, and Kim McQuate. Issue #8 was no exception, boasting a fine painting by Bob Larkin, which was quite possibly his best for the company. Setting the scene in what looks like a southern bayou is certainly a strange choice for a strip set in inner city New York, but Larkin's Pantha is suitably wild and sexy, and he can definitely paint a great panther. Surprisingly, despite becoming a member of Vampirella's supporting cast with #67, this remains her only appearance in human form on a cover.